

Gerald Sykes



The  
Centre of  
the Stage

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# THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE

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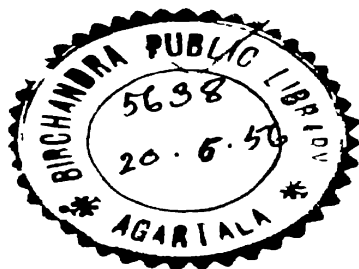
**THE NICE AMERICAN  
THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE**

# THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE

*A Novel*

by

GERALD SYKES



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**To E.**



*Incidents and people encountered elsewhere have been transferred unfairly to innocent East Hampton and guiltless Sag Harbor. Meanwhile all has become make-believe.*





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# PART ONE

## I

### THE WINE-DARK SEA

His homecoming should have been more hopeful. Summer's embrace, though not yet over-intimate, had recently been legalised, and for some time not even a rainy north-easter or frost itself would be grounds for divorce. And the occasion was as good as the weather. A few days before he had entered officially upon his adult life. Everything should have been different. He should have felt some expectancy.

Gillham asked him another unwelcome question. "Why do they call you Pete if your right name is Solomon?"

He shook it off with a standardised rebuff. "That's a long story."

After a while, though plainly aware of the cold shoulder that he had been getting, Gillham asked another. "Will that movie actor Spartas be there?"

Pete answered, "How should I know?"

A minute passed, they went on the left side of a long red petrol truck and a farmer's muddy pick-up, and the ever-smiling Gillham asked another. "What are you going to do now?"

Pete answered, "I don't know," and thought, 'I wonder if Mother really got twenty thousand out of him? Or was it only fifteen?'

He could not enjoy his native Long Island, even on a soft morning when the south-west wind almost straightened

out flags, neither the green of the June foliage nor the blue of their first glimpse of open sea when they crossed the bridge at Canoe Place, because he was riding in a car that belonged to Gillham. And there was no consolation in the thought that when they reached East Hampton, Gillham would be *his* guest. On the contrary, there would be still more painful enlightenment about his mother. There was bound to be.

Gillham had been questioning him with the skill and shamelessness of a born salesman ever since, to save a miserable \$3.61 in railway fare, Pete had got into the new yellow Cadillac convertible at the dark blue and white marquee on Fifth Avenue. And he had had to give some reluctant replies. "No, I haven't been back since the Christmas holidays . . . Easter I went straight from Boston to Washington . . . They interviewed me for a postgraduate school there. It trains you for the Foreign Service. Oh yes, business jobs abroad too . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Oh, I'll have to take the usual tests, and if I'm lucky I'll get a chance to stamp visas . . . Yes, I've seen him act. But he's a director now."

That was about all he allowed to be dragged out of him, but he felt ashamed of every word. He disliked especially his inclination to be amused by Gillham, and at times even to admire him.

The seagulls and beach grass that formerly had been enough to bring happiness; the sand dunes, the manila rope, the lobster pots, the smell of tar, the quick-drying beaches that invited him to freedom: all these meant nothing to him now. He would do well to disabuse himself of his old, old dream of a chance to ripen slowly in the sun while waves broke lazily at the rocky base of a maroon-and-white lighthouse. He was under attack, and he must learn quickly how to defend himself.

The name of this shrewd antagonist was so highly respected in business and government circles that no

sensible young man with plans for a career in the Department of State would have dreamed of anything but conciliating him. In appearance Gillham was not impressive, but he was feared by senators and heads of large corporations. He was no more than five feet five in height, and no more than a hundred and twenty-five pounds in weight, and he also resembled a jockey in his pale blue eyes, which had a curiously wandering expression. He was a sparrow 'cock who had known how to take full advantage of his smallness. He could quietly taunt larger men to anger and indiscretion. His early study of law—at night school—had made him a neat judge of provocation. And he was also effective with women, especially very beautiful women, who began by despising his puniness and ended all too often at his mercy, according to Pete's mother. He counted on their strong initial distaste for him, as an indispensable first step to their subjugation.

He seemed well aware of the bad impression created both by his appearance and by his aggressiveness, which he sought to conceal with every art at his command. His words were invariably mild and mellow, and he knew how to get exactly what he wanted while seeming to ask for nothing. For some reason Pete thought of him as wearing violent hounds-tooth jackets and lavender slacks when actually he dressed as cautiously as a Boston banker.

Once he had actually worn lavender slacks. But only because the occasion had seemed to require them. The occasion had been described to Pete by his mother.

"If ever you get into trouble with a girl," she had said with her celebrated heartiness, "*don't* think you have to marry her! You'd be a very good catch, even if we don't have much money, and there will be plenty of girls who will try to get you to get them into trouble. Poor little dears, they won't know that that's what they're doing, but *quand même* that's what they will be doing. And since you

are a good boy you will take them seriously. Don't do it! Offer to assume full financial responsibility—remember that, *financial*—and you'll be surprised how quickly everything straightens itself out. Little foxes, that's what we are at that age! But not because we mean any harm. Only because we don't know any better.

"But seriously, you could learn something from Gillham." She always called the financier by his last name. "He told me a terribly funny story about himself once. You think your father is smart, but listen to this. Gillham told it on himself. He was a little tight that night. You know how he is about women."

She had stopped mincing words with her son when he was sixteen. The responsibility of giving him good counsel had fallen upon her at the end of the War, in 1915, when her husband had returned from Europe in uniform and very soon afterwards gone there again in civvies. Her instruction had not been as wise as that which Pete had received from his father, but it *had* been high-spirited and amusing—and sometimes very shrewd. She did not, like his father, receive letters almost every week from unknown admirers of her psychological insight, but she did carry off her educational duties with a knowledge of the world that had to be respected. And she loved to tell stories.

"You see, Gillham got some little Scarsdale girl in trouble. Of course she was after him, and didn't know it, and of course he did. A trick like that would never fool *him*. She was the daughter of a bank president. I've forgotten the name. What was it? Oh well, what does it matter? But the father was an important man, no one to be trifled with, and little Miss Foxy Loxy took the trouble to get herself really in trouble, and to let Mama and Papa get just a whiff of the truth. Naturally they were all for a quick marriage—exactly what she wanted too. You know, Gillham is *very* rich. And so she arranged for all of them

to meet at the Chambord. She thought a good serious restaurant like that would be just the place to impress Gillham into doing the right thing.

"Little Miss Careless and Mama and Papa arrived there ahead of time. The father was prepared to be as stern as the law itself." His mother liked this kind of phrase *because*, in her words, it was 'corny'; its very shoddiness endeared it to her, and this was one thing more to be blamed on the theatre. "The mother had sacrificed a bridge party, at five cents a point, and was all prepared to throw her arms around her new son-in-law.

"And then he arrived! They caught a glimpse of him at the *vestiaire*, with a large package under his arm, and then he took off his overcoat and walked towards them. They had never seen anything like it! He was wearing a complete *zoot suit*- with lavender trousers pegged at the ankles, and a silver watch chain, a yard long, hanging down from a pocket. The jacket was the colour of old rose, and it fell to his knees. You can imagine! You know how short he is. He certainly looked sharp." She mimicked him ever so slightly, and it was possible to imagine exactly how he looked.

"Also, he talked the way he looked, out of the corner of his mouth, see, something like this, 'Howdy folks, lets-eatfastandgetouttathisjointangotoaplaceiknownoclipjoint likethiswheretheresawunnerfulelectricguitar if theresone thingilikeitsanelectricguitar.'

"Now that's what I call using your head! Who else would ever have thought of one like that? In five seconds the battle was over, and Gillham won. Little Miss Worried knew it too. And so did Mama and Papa." His mother always got carried away by her parts, and when she was playing a vulgar one she could become very low. "Marriage with a zoot suit? Impossible!" This sounded like a line she had had in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

"He thinks of everything! When they left, which they

did in about three minutes—why, Gillham just got up and went to the hat-check girl and got his package and went to the men's room, and when he came out he wasn't a zoot suiter at all. He was wearing his real clothes, which are always very good."

It was hard not to laugh at him, and sympathetically, especially when your own mother had so much skill at telling a story and winning your interest. No doubt the story had been basically altered in the telling. Pete, who had taken a course in mythology, wondered if Telemachus had also laughed occasionally at the suitors who paid court to *his* mother, Penelope, while his father was away. The disagreeable Antinous must also have had his points. More than once Pete had been obliged to acknowledge the disarming traits not only of Gillham but of the others who pursued his mother. If only their true natures didn't show through so clearly when they asked innocent questions like why was he called Pete.

Actually, his father had insisted upon having him christened Solomon—because he thought that if the boy had to hold his own against anti-Semitic taunts, his chances of becoming strong would be greater. The son had inherited from his half-Latin mother dark eyes and a pale skin that might conceivably be thought Jewish. The father, whose name was David Holderness, admired the mental alertness of Jews, and wanted his son, who was not a Jew, to attain some of the intellectual toughness which he believed they had been obliged to acquire through combating the many-sided hostility of a Christian society. He *believed* in a life of combat, he said, because he himself had been an illegitimate child. He often paid tribute to the educational advantages of early adversity. He had devoted a chapter to it in a book about the psychological problems peculiar to Americans.

Solomon's mother had protested against such a name as a handicap, but his ingenious father had claimed that it was



the kind of social disadvantage that could be turned into an individual opportunity. By taking on an understanding of the hardships imposed at birth upon each member of a minority, the boy could be aided to realise better his potentialities both for fellow-feeling and for intelligence.

The boy's mother was every bit as ingenious as the father, however, and retaliated by simply ignoring the name Solomon and calling her son by a name that was accepted as smart just then in East Hampton—Peter. And everyone henceforth called him Peter—or Pete. His father had tried for a while to call him Solomon or Sol or Solly, but it wouldn't work. The paternal device was restricted to official documents. The boy became known by his mother's invention, and was glad of it.

He liked, however, his father's many stratagems for combating his mother's preference for cultivating a fashionable softness in him. College had made him begin to appreciate the need of self-assertiveness in himself. He had found he possessed an actual enjoyment of quarrels, an enjoyment that had been making its presence felt as Gillham returned to questioning him about his mother. He knew that it would be more prudent to avoid a quarrel with the powerful financier, but a spirit of opposition had been roused in him ever since he had come to the conclusion, shortly after they left New York, that Gillham's aggressiveness was of such a kind that a policy of appeasement would surely in the end prove disastrous.

"Do you think Carlotta has invited anyone else for the week-end?" Gillham returned to the question as if he had not asked it before.

"How should I know?" Pete knew that the reply would undoubtedly have to be yes, but he was in no mood to help Gillham in any way.

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Well, you know how she is."

"Yes, it's true that she's most hospitable." Gillham had

previously shown a preference for 'most' instead of 'very'. and he also, according to Pete's word-conscious mother, had begun to sign his letters 'Faithfully yours'.

Having yielded to his spirit of opposition, Pete was now in its grip. "Why do you say that?" he demanded.

"Say what?"

" 'Most hospitable'."

"Because I meant it."

"But you said it as if you liked it."

"But I do. I admire it immensely." The Christmas evening she had given Gillham an attractive reprint of Mary James's *Princess Casamassima*, which he said he had even better than the film *Mrs. Miniver*. 'Immensely' had come to him from that book. "I find Carlotta's fidelity one of her most attractive attributes."

"mm," Peter replied discourteously. The sight of his homeland, as it flew past the car at seventy miles an hour, in the morning radiance, awakening memories of the deer and foxes and white herons he had seen in these same woods, made him throw away the last remnants of caution. If he wasn't going to try to conciliate, why not attack? He felt like a peaceful nation that had determined at last to stand up to a foreign aggressor—an aggressor whose ultimate designs he understood only too well. "I think that's part of your act."

"My what?" Gillham looked rather surprised.

"Listen, Mr. Gillham, I appreciate the ride." Pete found himself speaking to his formidable antagonist as effortlessly as if he were his own age. The verbal expressiveness that he found readily on the baseball field now returned. It might seem stupid to go out of his way to pick a quarrel with Gillham, but he believed he was on the right path, and in any case he enjoyed the quarrel. "But do you have to be so awfully charming? It just happens I know what you really think of me. My mother is not the kind of person who can keep a secret for very long."

"But there must be—I never said anything to Carlot—!"

"You must have said something about me and my father, and what you thought of both of us. Anyway, even if you only thought it, just remember one thing—I think the same thing about you."

Gillham started to speak, but said nothing. Long-standing habits of clever self-restraint showed in his pursed lips. But there was also about his tight, joyless mouth another expression which, if the employees of his firm had seen it, would surely have caused them alarm. The young lady from Scarsdale may have remembered it, too late, when she reviewed the mistakes of her unsuccessful campaign.

Gillham said nothing further during the ride, which lasted some fifteen minutes more. Only once did he speak. "What do you hear from your father?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Pete.

Now he felt more at home with Gillham—and more pity for him. It was obvious that he got none of the pleasures that a more awakened intelligence would have found in the beautiful Shinnecock hills. The curse of the city was on him. Still more than the timid office-holders of Washington, whose petty ambitions for higher government rating seemed to the new Bachelor of Arts to keep their stars in very narrow orbits, Gillham rode through the most rewarding things in life without appreciation of them. To the son of David Holderness it was suicidal to deprive oneself thus of the infinite consolations to be found every minute in contemplation of the earth. Gillham had drawn a bead on power, and had no eyes left for the beauty of the rhythmical recurrence of natural events; He had forfeited the satisfaction and the equanimity that are grounded in such experiences. The changes of the sun and the moon, of the four seasons, of buds and fruits and clouds and animals—of such gratuities he was self-cheated. It was not surprising that the lines about his mouth drooped unhappily. To him life was not a blessing but a curse, and its daily

continuance demanded the artificial stimulus of whisky, girls, and, above all, profits.

When finally they reached the house at East Hampton it was plain to Pete that Gillham saw first—and perhaps only—the amount of money that had been spent on it, how much its taxes, heating, lighting, gardening, and mortgages might cost from year to year, and what might be realised on it in a pinch. On its front porch white paint was beginning, ever so slightly, to blister, and his eye lingered an instant on this weak spot. The art with which the trees and flowers that had been planted by David Holderness, the lustre of the lawn, the peculiar sense of contentment that the whole house still communicated: of such things Gillham appeared perfectly unaware. If they had been called to his attention, and if he had been forced to agree that they possessed a monetary value on the real estate market, he would of course have entered them mentally into his stock-taking, under the heading of ‘intangibles’, and made due allowance for them; but to see them spontaneously or to feel the love and admiration that now humbled Pete: that could not be expected of him.

“And she gets four thousand a summer for this?” Gillham asked.

Pete was silent.

“Too big,” Gillham went on, as if he were bargaining. “I like a much smaller place. Less trouble to keep up.”

As they got out of the car Pete had to admit to himself: “I’m thinking of the dollar and cents side of the house, too. Especially now. Mother will rent it, then maybe she’ll give me the money I need to go to New Hampshire.”

The first person he saw, when he went indoors, was the white-haired woman who had served his family for over twenty years in many different capacities: as his nurse, as his mother’s wardrobe mistress, and as the house’s keeper. Her name was Miss Ticknor, but he called her Ticky. There had been a brief time when he had called her

Nanny, but she did not like that. She felt that it was a word that had been cheapened by too many unqualified nurses. She was a large bosomy woman, and she still wore a pale blue and white uniform of the kind that she had brought with her from England when she had been imported by Carlotta to look after her baby son. At that time the Holdernesses had expected other children to follow Pete.

Next to his mother and father, Ticky was the one closest to Pete in the world, but he did not fling his arms about her. She would not have liked that. He merely held out his hand while he cried, his face lighted with the pleasure that he had been feeling since his break with Gillham: "Ticky! How are you!"

"Peter! I didn't expect you for another hour," she said quietly and primly, with a touch of Lancashire accent that twenty-one years in the States had not diminished in the least. "You're putting on weight. Well, there'll be plenty for you to do. The Murrays arrive next week."

"Has Mother really signed the lease?" he asked hopefully.

"That I can't say. All I know is that the Murrays arrive next week."

"How many guests are there?"

"Five." And her even tone turned the number, ever so slightly, into an accusation.

"Is Mr. Spartas here?"

"Oh yes!" Her eyes brightened.

"I've got something for you in my bag."

"For me? A present?" Her child-like eyes warmed expectantly.

"Ah, here's Mr. Gillham. Do you know Mr. Gillham? Miss Ticknor."

"Oh yes, I know him. How do you do, Mr. Gillham?" Once again, her even tone, without the slightest deviation from courtesy, turned the greeting somehow into an accusation.

"Let me help you with your bag," Pete said to Gillham, and had no difficulty in taking it from his small, incompetent hands. "And let's go upstairs. Which room is Mr. Gillham in, Ticky? Is she awake?"

"I think so," she said, and directed them to the room assigned the financier, who was delighted to find *The Golden Bowl* at his bedside.

Pete had expected to leave Gillham there, and was surprised when Gillham followed at his heels as he went to his mother's room, at the southern end of the house, nearest the sea and the sunshine, and knocked.

"Come in!" she cried, and he went in, and Gillham followed after.

He saw his mother sitting up in bed, with a lace dressing-gown about her, and a bottle of sleeping pills next to a small silver alarm clock that could be folded and taken on road tours. She was looking well, he thought, on the whole, but obviously she had not had a good night. The familiar radiance was there, but she also looked tired. She would begin complaining soon, because the slightest deviation from well-being disturbed her and called forth her best eloquence. When she did not sleep well, everyone else must be made aware of it.

"Peter!" she cried. "You're early. Gillham! You must have driven very fast."

"Two hours, six minutes," said Gillham, not without pride.

Pete looked briefly at a handsome woman who stood by a window that opened out on the sea, with a pout on her ox-blood lips. She wore a pink dressing-gown that enhanced her full figure. "Peter!" she said warmly, and crossed over and kissed him. "It's so good to see you!"

He greeted her pleasantly. "Nancy! How are you?" but turned away from her as quickly as good manners would permit. He failed to inquire politely after her daughter, although he had heard last night by long-distance phone

from his mother that the daughter had arrived and was very pretty and very intelligent.

"My baby!" his mother said of him and to him. "My baby is going to become a diplomat. Just think, I couldn't get up to Cambridge for his commencement. What was that line in *Hay Fever*? 'Dithering about the embassy in badly cut trousers.' Peter, promise me, don't dither, and be very careful about your trousers. That's all I ask of you!"

"How are you?" he asked, and immediately realised his error.

"Terrible! I didn't sleep a wink."

He knew that she would be off on an account of every ache she had felt in the last year, together with every prescription that had been added to her enormous collection of little green bottles, if he did not speak swiftly.

"Tell me," he inserted expertly. "Is it true? Ticky says the Murrays arrive this week, and the place is rented."

"Well, not exactly," she said, and then to forestall a discussion that she plainly did not want, "Ah, here's breakfast! We'll talk about it later, dear. Here's breakfast!"

Ticky entered with a handsome Florentine tray bearing a small glass of tomato juice, one boiled egg, one piece of Melba toast, and a cup of black coffee.

His heart fell, as he thought, 'It's all like the old Greek story—Enigmatic Mother, Absent Father, Disagreeable Suitors, Faithful Old Nurse, Endangered Birthright, Unhappy Son. Everything is there except one item. Where is the Goddess of Wisdom who appears miraculously, in the very first chapter, to the Unhappy Son, and tells him what to do? Where is Pallas Athena? And what will I do without her?'

Through the open window, through the branches of a druidic two-hundred-year-old silver poplar, a silver sea-glow fell on the glossy black hair and the firm bosom of his beautiful mother, who began to eat with the gay assurance of an experienced actress who knows that nothing, of

course, so completely, captivates an audience as the sight of her own lovely fingers breaking bread. It would have been much more pleasant to let himself fall once more under her spell. The best seat of all had been reserved for him permanently in her private theatre; he had only to consent to sit in it to become a witness of her most entrancing performance. Her well-known fascination would surpass itself if he would merely look at it. Even her cheque-book could be opened if he would only quell the distance he had felt ever since he had discovered what she was really like.

A cry escaped from him. "God! You haven't changed a bit, have you?" He turned away from her with a look of disgust that, like his bitter words, left its mark at once on her. The next step that he must take, the positive action that he must find, was by no means clear to him, but he had to begin by rejecting her tricks.

"Peter!" she called after him with a pain that was not staged, and without anger, without reproach.

He went to his room without answering.

## II

### YOUNG IN THE TWENTHS

CARLOTTA had not been as carefree as she seemed to her son. In addition to a disagreeable incident of the night before, she was troubled by a bad dream. The incident she remembered all too clearly, but the dream kept just beyond the outstretched fingers of her mind. The incident she could identify with Nancy Whitlock, who was to blame for it. The dream associated itself somehow with a woman whom she had not seen in over twenty years and who was now dead—Mrs. Bouvier, her first mother-in-law.



The incident could be brushed aside. But the dream, while not pleasant in itself, recalled a night in 1928 which had been one of the most enjoyable and most memorable of her life.

In 1928 she had believed herself to be—as she later described herself, though always to sceptical friends who seemed to question her innocence at any age—“a naïve young bride” and “still a convent girl”. She was just Peter’s age, twenty-one. It was long before she had found in herself the need or the talent to entertain people in the theatre, although she kept on her bureau a gilt-framed picture of her namesake Italian grandmother, who had been on the stage. She herself looked more French than anything else, and she had recently come to the United States, and did not feel at home. She lived at East Hampton, and in the same house. It was also in June, before the summer season really got under way. The night of June 23, 1928—of course! Exactly twenty-two years ago! The date would never leave her. She had met David then.

She had told the story many times, and with so many zestful variations that sometimes it was hard to recall exactly what had happened.

The house was known then as the Bouvier house, or in local language, although it was quite large, the Bouvier cottage. It had been built in the '90s, with a Victorian capaciousness (six master bedrooms and four servant bedrooms) of a shingle that weathered a beautiful grey in sea air, and was a wedding gift from Judge and Mrs. Bouvier, along with a new roof, four new bathrooms, and a red Templar in the roomy barn that pleasantly mimicked the house at a distance of some forty yards. It was the kind of summer home that went with an annual income of about \$50,000, membership in the Maidstone Club, names in the Blue Book of the Hamptons and the Social Register of New York. To be maintained, even at the new low standards, its garden required the full-time services of two

men, at least eight months of the year. It was much too large a place for the newly-weds, but the Judge had been able to get it at a bargain price from an old friend in the steel business, and the Judge's wife predicted stoutly that it would soon seem much too small. The elder Bouviers were Victorians who had been sorely disturbed by the post-war rebellion of the younger generation, who recognised the menace of hip flasks and petting parties and dance records, and thought to save their son from them by giving him every opportunity to create a wholesome home life. (Carlotta could be really funny, later on, when she told this part of her career. Everybody loved the Scott Fitzgerald days, and especially her story about the Fitzgeralds themselves, when they got mixed up about a week-end party, arrived at a great house on the wrong week-end, while their hosts were away, and satisfied their pique by cutting page 100 out of every volume in the library.) They also bought for him a brownstone house in the East 60s in Manhattan. They themselves had a still larger summer place in Southampton.

The name of Carlotta's first husband was Jim. He had fought in World War I—or rather, to be exact, had been rejected by Plattsburg and had bought his own ambulance, gone to France with the Field Service, and paid for the privilege of carrying the wounded from the battlefield at great risk to his own life. He had a refined and gentle face, with watery blue eyes and clean-cut Anglo-Saxon features which had been caught well in a splashy portrait of him by a gifted imitator of Sargent, in uniform, wearing the ribbon of the Croix de Guerre, looking like The Eternal Son. It was the face of an only child who wished very much to please his exacting parents and above all his mother. Its well-meaning mouth said that good breeding requires deferential defencelessness before one's enemies. Its placid eyes contained the hope that all would surely turn out for the best if only everyone were decent and courteous to

everyone else. It was the kind of head that preferred to court death eagerly in war, rather than face the tensions of peace. It also attained its maximum dignity and clarity when fumed with alcohol.

During a return trip of Jim's to France, in 1926, Carlotta had met him at a smart dance in Paris. Her name was de Breteuil then. She had a few pints of American blood in her veins, but had spent all her life in the countries that provided the rest of her racial inheritance: England, France, and Italy. In those days her good-looking stepfather played an important part in her thoughts, because he was daily trying to seduce her, and she wished both to slip into the gay life that he and his friends lived—which she already understood so well—and to fight clear of it. Also, an eminent neurologist had mildly alarmed her after she had had the beginnings of a breakdown. More importantly, she wished to find a man who would compel her respect. It was a time when Paris spoke enviously and admiringly of 'Americanisation', and when she longed passionately to see the land where her mother had been born—and also to get away from her mother and her stepfather. Marriage with Jim would have tempted almost any girl in her set, and seemed especially auspicious to her. He had just enough gentleness and wit to appeal to her literary tastes, and just enough dash to sever her lingering ties with her mother. He was the close friend of a brilliant American poet, who had been his class-mate at Harvard, his comrade in the War, and had written an excellent book about his unjustified detention in a French war-time prison. From this poet Jim had picked up some attractive mannerisms that, especially when liquor had brightened him, gave him remarkable charm. Carlotta thought him cleaner, taller, healthier, stronger than the Frenchmen who paid court to her. He would rescue her from an unhealthy *rentier* atmosphere whose idleness frightened her, as well as from a dangerous capacity for boredom that she had observed in

herself. His legal training also gave him a certain skill in pleading his case, and one evening when he had been drinking some 1870 Calvados he succeeded in getting her to agree to marry him.

('I was nineteen then,' she recalled, lying in her bed dreamily in 1905. 'He was the first man who ever kissed me. I thought we had to get married.')

Since she was every bit as much a catch as he, his parents approved of her. She came to America in 1926, as his bride, after a marriage celebrated in Paris and reported with photographs in the very best society pages. Judge and Mrs. Bouvier continued to approve of her—her family, her beauty, her manners—even when it was learned that her mother and her stepfather had spent most of her inheritance. Perhaps because of her European education and the strength of purpose that had steered her clear of her stepfather's wiles, she had an attribute that they desired above all in Jim's mate, she was *serious*. They thought she read too many books and talked too much of painting and music, but these of course were minor imperfections that some residence in the healthier climate of America would soon remove, especially when there were children.

So she was installed as the mistress of the cottage at East Hampton. Each Friday evening she sent the gardener to the Long Island Railroad Station in the red Templar—a reluctant concession to Jim's dash which she had never learned to drive herself—to get her husband. He arrived, wearing a wilted white linen suit and a sweaty panama hat, exhausted by his work with the Wall Street law firm where his father had been a partner until his appointment to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. Within the next hour he took a shower, a dip in the ocean at the Club beach, and his first long drink of bootleg rye whisky and ginger ale. The week-end began. There was a large party on Friday night, a large party on Saturday night, and no party at all on Sunday night. In between there was golf, tennis,

and sailing. It was a way of life that was envied strenuously by those who could not afford it—and deplored more and more articulately by Carlotta.

For two years she tried to be a good wife. She also tried to have a child, believing that offspring would correct or palliate the deficiencies of her marriage. But the only way she could fill up the house was with guests—business friends of Jim's, for the most part, though an occasional friend of hers came and contributed an unhappy reminder of a European life that she was beginning to regret.

One Friday evening she and two French friends, a husband and wife, played a trick on Jim that he took far too seriously. When he arrived, looking exceptionally limp, the French couple, laughing, met him at the door with the news that Carlotta was acting strangely. She insisted, they said, upon playing the part of William Tell and wanted one of them to stand with an apple on his head, so that she could shoot it off—not with an arrow but with a knife, which she said she could throw very well.

Just then she appeared and told Jim he must put the apple on *his* head. "Darling, you'd be much better as the son. Don't worry, I learned all about knife-throwing from a man in the circus when I was a little girl. I've been practising and I'm just as good as I ever was."

But Jim refused to let them put the apple on his head, and acted in such a killjoy manner that when she explained to him that it was all a joke, cooked up between her and her friends, to fight their boredom, and she had never intended to throw a knife at him—and the bright ones she had assembled from the kitchen were merely for effect—he refused to laugh and said he didn't think it very funny. Her acting had been so realistic that he was short-tempered all week-end and the French couple left sooner than they had expected to. In a way it had been a kind of compliment to her skill.

But still in those days she had no interest in the theatre.

She had not yet realised its possibilities as a way to channel her energies and give her something to live for. It had not yet become the bridge between her preference for Continental ways *and* the American scene. When she went to a stock company production during the summer time she was astounded by the triviality of both its plays and its productions. Perhaps because of the lowly origins of her Italian grandmother, the only theatre that interested her was the most distinguished, the most intellectual, that of Pirandello and Chekhov, Stanislavsky and Copeau. In those days she thought only fleetingly of the theatre as a means of self-expression. She had not yet learned how much an actress can overlook if only she is kept busy. She had never made the remark that later became habitual with her, "The theatre is what keeps me going."

('I was awfully highbrow then,' she thought, lying in her bed in 1900.)

Later it was difficult for her friends to imagine a time when she had not been an actress. They did not appreciate the struggle she had to go through before she could even bring herself to imagine a break with the customs that she had been trained to revere. They had no idea of the disrepute of her grandmother in her family. How often her mother had regretted being persuaded by her father to call her Carlotta. Not only could she not see herself in a professional career, she could not imagine herself in any other rôle except that of Jim's wife.

She was still held firmly by her hope of making a go of her marriage, although she had long since discovered many things wrong with him. She had never before known a man who would be content with so few real satisfactions. The course that he set for her had been charted for them both by his parents; there was almost no personal desire in it. The dash he had seemed to show in France had disappeared as soon as he knew his mother, shook his father's hand, returned to his home. All resemblance to his



poet friend, it was plain, had been as immaterial as the red and blue and green reflections cast by a revolving ball of glass in 'moonlight' dances at the Club. There was a French word that she found her tongue turning over repeatedly. It was the word '*mécanisé*', so much in vogue that it required little effort to come upon it, but so repugnant that much courage and no little shame were necessary to apply it to her own husband. He went about his duties and his pleasures with a machine-like absence of *esprit* that made her recall, too late, the warnings of French friends against just this deficiency, which they said was almost invariable among Americans.

By the summer of 1818 it was obvious that her marriage was in grave danger. More than once she had found herself wondering how she might poison him and avoid detection. He had been drinking heavily, and he had also been unfaithful to her, rather noticeably, with one of the Club wives, a tan-sweatered golf champion, as if he were trying to say indirectly to her, 'You think I know nothing about love-making, that I'm little better than impotent. Well, you see, other women disagree with you.' Also, he made references to her childlessness, and told stories of the abortions he had caused any number of Boston Irish girls to have, when he was a student at Harvard—which proved, of course, that *he* was not sterile.

Still more painful was his suggestion that he would have been happier if he had married someone else. "You're too restless," he told her. "You can't just enjoy life. You'll never settle down. If I'd had any idea what you're really like——!" And when she had insisted upon driving the red Templar and had crashed into a parked police car, hurling him against a windshield that cracked but did not shatter, he had actually intimated that she had wished to kill him and had been willing to die herself if only her aim were accomplished. And she had had to admit, as she lay next to his snoring, whisky-rank body, beneath embroidered

Irish linen sheets, that he might have been right. His parents, who appeared to be changing their mind about her, also seemed to think so. By this time they had begun to make references to her Italian grandmother, and now, with more cleverness than she knew, Mrs. Bouvier Sr. liked to talk about the Borgias.

When Carlotta had given up hope, and was genuinely alarmed by her own state of mind, she had met David. She had come to East Hampton during the third week in June, to prepare the house for the summer, and one afternoon she had run into David. She had seen him many times when he had worked in a local drug-store, and knew quite a few odd facts about him—above all, the one which was supposed to be a secret: his illegitimacy—but it was not until that afternoon that she really became aware of his existence. Instead of going to the Club she had bicycled to a place where she walked alone on an unfrequented part of the beach, feeling sad, and caught sight of him standing in a salt marsh, studying some animal. She wanted to walk up to him and talk to him, and she did. Otherwise he would not have seen her.

He was looking down at a sea animal that ordinarily repelled her, at evil blue claws that could close and hurt. It was a crab, and it lay in a pool of tide-water. "Hello," he said briefly, and continued his examination.

"What is it?" she asked.

He told her.

"Why are you studying it?"

She must have asked it with real interest, for in a short time he began to talk, and then it was difficult to stop him. He told her that he was interested in the crab because he had remembered it frequently while he had been attending classes at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, and had determined to go back to his native Long Island, as soon as his medical studies permitted, to renew his acquaintance with an old friend. To him the crab was



one of the most rewarding comrades of his childhood, and he spoke with scorn of those brutal human beings who actually boiled crabs alive, to create a table delicacy, when their shells were soft.

('It was plain even then,' she thought, lying on her bed in 1950, 'that he would never practise medicine. He was always more interested in medical research—and psychology.')

Most of the details of that talk—the first time they were alone together—now escaped her. She could remember more vividly her impressions of the afternoon than the afternoon itself. Above all, it had *troubled* her. She had felt at once that he was a very exceptional man, not only by local but by the standards she had known in Paris. At her aunt's home on the tranquil, leafy Place des Vosges she had had an opportunity to meet remarkable people, because her uncle was the editor of a famous French literary magazine. The best part of her education had consisted of visiting her father's family and hearing the best minds of Europe discussed critically at table. From meeting illustrious artists, scientists, and statesmen she had gained some discernment, which exile had sharpened, in the classification of talent. She therefore felt able to feel, with some assurance, that David was truly gifted, and might, with the right guidance, have an extraordinary career. But she also felt that he was much too aggressive. While he was talking about the crab he *lectured* at her. Also, he had the bad taste to assume, ever so slightly, that she was an *ignoramus* simply because she was a woman. It happened that she was somewhat touchy on this point, and indeed one of the reasons why she wanted to come to America had been to avoid certain Frenchmen who had the unfortunate habit of treating women as if they were capable of nothing better than beauty and charm. She admired the feminists, in spite of their excesses. She had been much aware of her American and English blood. She liked what he said, but

she disliked his way of saying it. His feeling for the crab, and his belief in the need of children to establish an early *rappport* with animals and plants and all natural phenomena, as a protection against what William James had called the 'over-stimulation' of city life—this kind of thing moved her deeply. Such disinterested passion compelled her respect, and respect was what she desired above all to have wrung from her. She wanted him to put into the best possible form his idea that children need to develop an early *rappport* with nature if they are to sustain the later pressures of modern times. She felt he could become the rare kind of scientist who could keep close to his emotional life and to his tenderest intuitions, while at the same time sending forth a stern, critical intelligence into the unknown.

No doubt his over-aggressiveness came from his illegitimacy, about which she had heard only that he had been brought up in a tiny cottage in Sag Harbor by his poor mother, who could not marry his rich father because his father's wife, who moved in much more exalted circles in East Hampton, would not give him a divorce.

When Carlotta said good-bye to David, and bicycled home—without making any definite arrangement to see him again—she found herself remembering the author of a novel she had been reading, an author whom she had met briefly in Italy. She believed that perhaps this author had been somewhat like David when he too had been only twenty. Both of them had come from a lower social class. The author's name escaped her, but he was English, and not very tall, and he had a beard. He seemed to be ill, perhaps tubercular. His wife was an attractive blonde-haired German woman of prominent family. His wife had taken off her shoes while they were talking.

The author had made a deep impression on Carlotta, but she believed that David might prove to be quite as exceptional in his own way. He was not as unreasonable

as the Englishman, and he did not rant against science; on the contrary, he believed in it. Above all, both of them obviously could not live without a woman. They were too passionate. She already knew this about David, in spite of his aloofness. And both of them had a similar feeling for the holiness of animals and plants and all natural things. Both of them were clever also with their hands. David had shown her a boat he had made, which he kept on a salt-water pond. It was made of wood that he had picked up here and there, and it had beautiful lines. It reminded her of a quite primitive whale boat that belonged to a pilot on the Italian coast, a man whom she had admired very much as a child. It was 'dark-prowed' and primordial, like an image she had seen long ago in a dream.

The English author had told her of things he had sewn. He admired some embroidery work on her dress, and said that he too could embroider. What *was* his name? He had been very famous then. Carlotta had met so many great names that she forgot them all almost at once.

David had much more patience than the Englishman. That was one of her first impressions of him. Both of them had been given an ancient, unsought power, and it was this that always interested her most in the few men who possessed it.

She had not flirted with him. That would have been a great mistake. There was too much sexual passion in his lean body and his brooding eye. Like the author, he made a *mystique* of it. Gallic levity would be distinctly out of place.

She tested him fearfully. Jim had been such a disappointment that she believed all American men must lack something essential.

When she left him she did *not* invite him to visit her. Instinct warned her that they would meet again, and that it would be wiser to practise no feminine arts. Also, she wanted to go home and think about him. She wanted to

find what was wrong with him besides his aggressiveness. What was *really* wrong with him. Could a mere boy ever win her respect and hold it?

She walked away from him suddenly, without any warning. She said, "Well, good-bye," and did not even thank him for showing her his boat although he had gone to considerable trouble in getting it out for her.

She felt that he wanted to see her again, that he began to get interested in her while they talked, but she did nothing to encourage him. This was not because she felt loyal to Jim, but because she wanted David so much to be what she hoped he would be.

And when he appeared at her front door, in the evening, after dinner, looking much cleaner than he had been in the afternoon, she still did not act with any of the art that she would have found, without effort, if she had thought it wise to try to make an impression on him. She felt pleased, but she wondered, 'Did I tell him that Jim was not here this week-end? Does he know that I'm here all alone? Is he just trying to have an affair with me?'

She knew at once that the last question would have to be answered with a no. He was decidedly not an adolescent looking for a sexual initiation. Even if he turned out to be a virgin—which was unlikely—he was the kind of man who would prove to have known the essentials of love long before he ever made it.

Strange, how mature he was, even at twenty. He lacked social polish, and tried to cover his embarrassment with an unfortunate display of intellectual brilliance now and then, but in understanding of others he seemed to have been born centuries ago. He was already responsible. This was so much the case that he knew how to savour his youth as few young people do, and could spend himself in gaiety—as if he had already come to a realisation of the carefree vigour presently at his command, which all too quickly would be channelled into serious duties.

When he came to the door he asked, "May I come in?"

And when she hesitated he continued, "You have a good effect on me. I want to see you. I need something you can give me."

She opened the door, protesting, "What's that you're saying? I don't know what you mean."

He started to answer as he came through the door, but she interrupted, "No, don't try to tell me now. Let's go out on the side porch. It's so restful out there. There's a nice breeze now. And I want you to see my garden."

He had brought with him some notepaper and two fountain pens. "While I'm getting acquainted with you, you might as well be doing something useful," he said with a touch of rudeness that she found herself enjoying. "Someone sent me this." He held up a letter.

"What's that?"

"It's a chain letter. Let me read it to you."

"Let's go out on the porch first."

On their way to the side porch they passed a grand piano, and he said, "Oh, I'd like to play that!" but she did not offer to open it up, and she said quickly, "I'm afraid it's out of tune. This house is not really open yet for the season. I must get that old man from Sag Harbor over." And she led David out on to the side porch, passing by furniture that was still shrouded in winter garments. There was a strong smell of cedar, camphor, and tar in the living-room, which still presented the appearance of a steeplechase course, with trunk jumps and luggage hurdles. Pictures were covered with cheesecloth, and bric-à-brac with tissue paper. The slip-covered chairs did not seem yet to have returned from their winter vacation, and gave the impression that they were not quite ready for anyone's weight.

On the porch, however, there were none of these prosy reminders of her life with Jim. The porch, she felt, and the garden it looked on, were hers. This evening they seemed especially beautiful, scented by honeysuckle and

syringa, and illuminated by a half-moon that had charged the fog that had rolled in from the sea with a muted rustle of light.

"Will you have a drink?" she asked. "There's some fairly good bourb—"

"No," he said. "I don't want a drink."

"Sit down."

"Yes," he said, but he continued to stand. "This is much better than the piano. You know something about gardens. Not bad, not bad. I like gardens too." After staring through the porch screen at her flowers, he sat down on a couch.

She sat opposite him in a wicker chair.

"This is what I got in the mail today," he said, taking out his letter again.

She prepared to listen reluctantly.

He read:

"Here is a chain with only two names on the list ahead of yours from the start. You will reach the top in only two steps. You will receive \$125 in a few days. Mail \$1 to the name at the top of the list. Make five copies of this letter, removing the top name and adding yours at the bottom. Send to five reliable friends. If you do not wish to participate, return this letter to me."

"And then there are five names and addresses, with my friend's at the bottom," he said. "But I'm not going to send the dollar. I'm going to send out dozens of these letters, as if they came from my friend—I know lots of people he knows—and put *my* name at the top of the list! Why spend money when you can make it?"

There was a mischievousness in his eyes that she had not expected to see there after the serious conversation of the afternoon. He seemed much younger. "What am I supposed to do?" she asked.

"You copy the letters," he said, "and sign them the way I tell you to. I'll be making out the envelopes."

"It's not honest, is it?" she asked.

(*'I was the solemn one in those days!'* she thought, lying on her bed in 1810—and winced.)

"It's the best idea I've had all week."

"Give me some paper," she said. A servant had told her of a prank of his that was still discussed in East Hampton, although it had taken place before her arrival. While he was playing in a high-school football game between Sag Harbor and East Hampton, a game which his father had attended, he had got the Sag Harbor cheer-leader to give a spelled-out cheer for him, calling him, not O-C-o-n-n-o-r, which was his name in those days, but H-o-l-d-e-r-n-e-s-s. This had caused a scandal at the time and was said to have had a lot to do with his father's adopting him legally. David had understood the tough old man, who had laughed appreciatively at his son's boldness.

'He's not all one thing,' she thought, and she liked his many-sidedness.

While she was at work on her first letter, her coloured maid Adelia appeared at the door which led to the side porch.

"There's somebody here, ma'am," she said, with a disapproving glance at David. And in a lower voice, "Judge and Mis' Bouvier."

Carlotta was surprised. She had not expected to see her parents-in-law until the next day. She wondered what they would think when they found David there. One of the reasons for their visit, undoubtedly, was to reassure her about Jim, whose behaviour with other women had become quite flagrant. And now they might get the impression that she was consoling herself with David.

"Will you ask Mrs. Bouvier to come out here?" she said, and at that moment Mrs. Bouvier appeared. She wore pince-nez and looked like the widow of President Harding,

with severe eyes beneath straight hair severely combed back. She belonged to the Audubon Society, and was greatly troubled by the home life of the cowbird, which was notoriously promiscuous and improvident. The Judge, who was very stout, followed her. He was said to resemble ex-President Taft, although Carlotta could never see it. He had large tawny moustaches and a genial expression.

But Mrs. Bouvier was not one to reveal her thoughts so quickly, so naïvely as Adelia. She addressed David promptly as if he were still the boy who had once delivered groceries to her home in Southampton when he was fifteen years old: "Oh David! So nice to see you! That reminds me, I must call your mother Monday morning. Is there any way she could come to see me? When do the buses run?"

"I don't know," said David.

"But surely you could find out."

"I could," he conceded, but said no more.

"David, it's very good to see you, my boy," said the Judge, with a friendly smile. "I hope everything is going well with you."

"Thank you, Judge Bouvier. I hope everything is going well with you too." His smile was slightly ironic. There had been some bitter attacks in the New York newspapers against an opinion written by the Judge in a celebrated case, an opinion which defended the right of courts to issue injunctions against labour unions, to prevent strikes. The Judge was known, in the newspapers, as one of the most conservative men on the bench.

Mrs. Bouvier did not like the resistant tone taken by David. Not only had he shown no shame upon being discovered on the porch with her attractive daughter-in-law; he was also somehow lacking in the deference customarily shown herself and the Judge.

"Well, I'm afraid I'll just have to give the sewing to someone else. I don't think your mother would like that."



"As a matter of fact, Mrs. Bouvier, Mother has not done any work of that kind for some time—ever since Father adopted me."

"Oh? I didn't know."

David could not refrain from following up his minor victory. "I thought you did. It was Judge Bouvier's firm that handled it."

The Judge came to his wife's aid promptly. "I never discuss such things with Mrs. Bouvier, David," he said with some sharpness.

"But Jim told me that you were particularly pleased that father had done the right thing at last. You said it was better than giving a window to St. Luke's."

"I can't believe that Jim said anything of the sort," Mrs. Bouvier declared flatly, and turned to Carlotta. "May we sit down?" she asked rather bitingly.

"Oh, please sit down," Carlotta begged her, and looked reproachfully at David. She wished he had not been so forthright, although she found herself siding with him.

"But he did, Mrs. Bouvier," David said, when she and the Judge had seated themselves. His tone was milder now. "I can understand why some people would think the window was a more worthy cause." He looked hard at her. "Personally, I don't, but I can understand."

"Well, after all," the Judge interrupted, "the important thing is that David and his mother have some money now. I hope you put it to good use, my boy, and learn a solid respectable trade, so that you will never have to be dependent on anyone."

David flared up again. "I haven't been dependent on anyone since I was fourteen years old. As for the money I got from Father, it's being spent on my education."

"He's going to medical college," Carlotta put in. "He was just telling me about it," she explained to Mrs. Bouvier, who gave her an oh-no-you-don't-get-off-so-easily-girl look which made her regret her momentary con-

cession to the conventions and determine to take a stiffer tone with her redoubtable mother-in-law. She had been infected with David's rebelliousness.

"A doctor!" Mrs. Bouvier exclaimed, while managing to carry on, at the same time, her separate silent battle, in woman's language, with Carlotta. "You're going to be a doctor!" If David became a member of a profession, instead of a trade, he would be encroaching upon the dignities that her own son had already attained, and this seemed to stir some old, hidden maternal resentment.

"Isn't that splendid, my dear?" the Judge hastened to say. "Oh, I'm sure you'll make a very fine doctor, my boy."

David looked at him with the barest trace of amusement on his face, and said, "Thank you." Then he turned to Carlotta and astonished her by calling her, for the first time, by her first name. "Good-night, Carlotta," he said as easily and smoothly as if he too were a member of the Club. "And once again, you must forgive me for barging in on you like this. But I did enjoy your garden. I hope I'll see you soon."

She noticed that he was leaving the chain letters behind, and started to call them to his attention, but checked herself, and later put a newspaper over them. They would give her an excuse to get in touch with him, to see him again. She knew already that she very much wanted to, and with this realisation came a return of the feminine art that she had not thought it wise to command that afternoon in the salt marsh.

She offered to take him to the front door, but he insisted that she stay with the Bouviers. "I can find my way out all right," he said, but in such a way that she understood, quietly, that he appreciated her problem with her mother-in-law and would help her in every way possible.

"But you'll stumble over the furniture," she protested. "I really must go with you."

"No, no! You stay here. Good-night. Good-night, Mrs. Bouvier. Good-night, Judge." And he walked out swiftly with a masculine decisiveness that she liked very much.

At last, she thought, at last she had met a man who because of his origins could act vigorously. No man in her family had worked for his living. They had all been *rentiers*, freed from economic struggle by the struggle of their forebears, and she had been secretly convinced that they were all doomed. Marriage to Jim had unexpectedly meant marriage into a similar class—for the money he earned was nothing compared with the money he had inherited—and this had revived her fears. What did every large house in the Hamptons seem to be saying? That it could not be maintained much longer, the staff of maids and gardeners must be reduced, times were changing the old order passing.

But she had met a man whom adversity had toughened. It gave her hope of a kind she had never known.

### III

#### UNDONE ON A DUNE

WHEN he was gone Carlotta played a hunch—and it was one of the few times in her life when a hunch paid off. She never forgot this fact.

Also, she decided quickly upon a new policy of firmness towards the Bouviers, who thought they had come for a fairly long visit. They did not realise what she had in store for them. They expected to stay until about eleven o'clock. They had much to discuss with her. They were afraid, of course, that she would divorce Jim, which might compromise the Judge's hopes of being appointed to the

Supreme Court. It was known that President Coolidge liked the stand he had taken on the labour case, but on the other hand—

"Jim has been under a great strain lately. It's that case he's been preparing for the brass company," his mother said after they had chatted aimlessly about friends for about half an hour. It was the opening gun of a campaign.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not talk about Jim," said Carlotta. She felt free now of the shame of her feeling about Jim that had previously led her to show more docility to his parents.

Usually the Judge kept his eyes on the ceiling, as he did in his court-room, only lowering them from his contemplations when he poured himself a glass of water; but now he turned them, with a look of surprise, towards his daughter-in-law, as if she threatened to become an unruly witness.

"But I think we should, dear," Mrs. Bouvier persisted. "It's very important to your happiness." She had already complained privately that "Carlotta's beginning to act like a movie star," but this was the first time she had encountered such flat opposition.

"I'm not interested. And I have a headache. I think I'm going to have to say good-night to you very early. I really must go to bed." It gave Carlotta remarkable satisfaction to speak so bluntly, to feel an effortless dramatic power that she had not known was at her command.

"You seemed very well when that boy was here."

"Not at all. I was going to send him home."

"He looked as if he were settled for the evening."

"Well, he wasn't." Of late she had been resisting her husband's family, though more by acts than by words, but now she used a kind of language that she had dutifully repressed ever since coming to the United States.

"Really, Carlotta!"

"Don't you think that we might all be a little happier if we brought out into the open the many facets of this

case?" the Judge began mildly. "You see, my dear, you're very young and——"

"No, I don't!" Carlotta interrupted him for the first time in her life.

"But——" he began again, and then stopped. It was so long since he had had to deal with outright rudeness. He turned helplessly in the direction of his wife.

"You certainly seemed a lot healthier a half-hour ago!" Mrs. Bouvier remarked.

"Well, I've got a splitting headache, and I'm going to bed." She stood up, as a clear signal that she wished them to go, and there must have been something hypnotic about her discourtesy, for even her formidable mother-in-law got on her feet, although it was only ten o'clock, or a little after. The Judge rose automatically.

Immediately Carlotta's tone changed, and she fell into the rôle of the *jeune fille bien élevée* with a rather nasal but extremely polite soprano that she had used to charm them upon her first arrival in America. She kept them moving with her towards the door, however, as she said, "Some other time, of course, we really must *talk!* It was so kind of you to come, so kind of you to *care* enough to come. I've been very unhappy about Jim, but I don't want to discuss it now. I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown this week, and I *will* if I don't get more rest." She rattled on so fast that Mrs. Bouvier had no chance to break in. And her sudden switch from frank rudeness to excessive politeness seemed to take the older woman by surprise. It was one of the first times in her adult life when Carlotta had felt herself dramatically powerful, able to dominate others, while seeming not to. She breathed a prayer of thanksgiving to her Italian grandmother, and hoped fervently that she would never again be tempted to the violence that Jim had provoked. She had waited a long while for this consciousness of strength—which she had also experienced when she had told her own

mother that she was going to marry Jim—and she enjoyed it thoroughly.

Her control of the situation was such that at the door the Judge, his spotless panama hat in his hand, said, "Well, I hope you feel better, my dear. You really must get some rest. I can see that you've been under a great strain."

His wife pierced his too solid corpulence with a hat-pin glance that changed him in a twinkling from geniality to terror. He had been guilty of gullibility as well as disloyalty, and would have to serve a long sentence in a domestic penitentiary.

"Yes, I do hope you recover the remarkably good health you had only a few minutes ago," she remarked. It was the first time, she confided later to friends, that she had seen that "Jim had caught a tartar".

Carlotta blithely overlooked her acidity and rattled on, "Goodness, another summer's beginning! *Incroyable!* Jim doesn't think he'll be able to get down to East Hampton next week-end either. That case for the brass company must be very important. Of course I never understand such things. Well, I guess I'll just have to get along without him. There's always the garden. *Il me faut cultiver*—. I guess I'll just have to cultivate my garden!"

She conducted her mother-in-law resolutely to the door of the long black closed car which had started up its motor when the chauffeur had caught sight of the Judge and his wife, unexpectedly early, on the front porch. He was the kind of chauffeur who never strayed far from his car. Mrs. Bouvier became closed-mouthed at the end, content to look her distrust, rather than speak it. The Judge contented himself with a neutral and unfeeling "Good-night, my dear!"

Carlotta went upstairs. She had turned on the hot-water tap in her bathtub when she thought she heard a noise on the porch. She turned off the water and listened, her heart pounding. The heavy odour of bath salts, which she associ-

ated with Carthage and Flaubert's *Salammbô*, made her throat muscles relax and her thighs go soft. The noise was not repeated. She turned on the water again, and only when the tub was full and the tap had to be turned off once more was she aware that there *was* a noise on the front porch. Someone was knocking on the screen door.

She went downstairs as noiselessly as possible, hoping Adelia, who had gone upstairs, had not heard. She tried to subdue her excitement and her elation. "I knew it!" she said to herself with triumph, even while prudence warned her against disappointment.

"Who is it?" she asked cautiously, from the side of the front door, which was open. The screen door, however, was locked.

"It's me. I left my letters here," said David. His lean tan hand was on the door-knob, and his intent brown eyes on her.

Only then did she realise how heavily she had gambled on him. She had never doubted for a moment that he would return. It was the first time when she found that she could rely on his sure instinct to know, without words, what she really wanted.

She unlatched the screen door. He came in, and they solemnly set about looking for his letters. Each of them knew they were merely observing the rites that a fiction had imposed upon them, and each knew that the other knew, but this did not stop them from following the steps of an exact choreography. They went to the porch, she turned up a newspaper, and cried, "Here they are!" with perfect surprise.

He thanked her.

"If you had come a little later, I'd have been undressed and in the tub."

"I waited as long as I thought I should," he said slyly.

She was not sure she liked this. "I don't know what you mean." On second thought, she did not like it at all.

He quickly corrected himself. "I missed the letters almost as soon as I left, but I thought it would be better not to come back for them until the Judge and Mrs. Bouvier had left."

"You waited?"

"Yes, I walked up and down."

"If they had stayed late, would you have waited?"

"Yes."

"Would you like a drink?"

While he was saying "Yes," she corrected herself, "Oh, but you don't drink!"

"Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. This time I do."

"So do I."

They faced each other, unsmiling, for a moment, like members of a primitive dance ceremony which demanded perfect inexpressiveness. Then they walked to a mahogany sideboard, and found some whisky, some tall glasses, some seltzer, and some ice. Each took a big drink, and they raised their glasses to each other solemnly. "Here's to your mother-in-law," he proposed.

"My mother-in-law," she echoed. There was an air of punctilio about the occasion that made her think of a bull-fight she had seen in Seville.

"Ugh!" he commented after a long swig, exactly as if he had taken hemlock and were waiting for it to make its presence felt in his legs.

"Don't you like it?"

"Oh, yes."

"You don't sound like it."

"Let's get out of here," he proposed.

"No, it's damp outside. You must have been very cold. Did you get wet? Look at you! Your shoes are all wet! Why didn't you wait in a dry place?"

"It was all right. Let's get out of here."

"But it's wet out——"



"We'll go to the beach. The fog has lifted now. I know a dry place in the sand. Under a dune."

"But—!" She looked towards her lovely porch, as if to say, "What's the matter with that?"

"Come on!"

"All right," she assented quickly.

She took a light coat with her. He left his letters where he had found them. When they went outdoors she started towards the main road, but he said, "No, I know a back path. Much better." And so they were not seen from any of the many cars that passed by.

The place under the dune on the beach *was* dry, and they were all alone. The sea had flattened out into ripples that might have washed the banks of a wide river. The fog had lifted, and moonlight made the foam on the very low waves look phosphorescent. She was glad he had taken her to so gentle a scene, which sponged her mind clean of family disputes.

She wanted to talk to him, to ask him questions. He stretched out her coat for her to sit on, and then found a place in the sand for himself, about six feet away from her. If he was ardent, he was also disciplined. She had detected not the slightest trace of flirtatiousness in him.

"Do you hate all this?" she asked.

"All what?"

"Well, East Hampton."

"No." The answer did not surprise her, because she had already noticed in his dealings with the Bouviers a humour that seemed to mean he could cure himself of resentment.

"I could understand it if you did."

"I don't."

"Why not? I would. I think I do."

"You don't have a job. I do."

"Oh, you mean your studies."

"I mean a lot more than that. As a matter of fact, I'm

afraid of my studies. That's why I came back to Sag Harbor yesterday. I'm not at all sure I'll be happy when I'm an M.D."

"What about research? You spoke of that this afternoon."

"Sure, I want to do research. Especially in psychology. But you can get awfully crusty at it. The research men I know—well, I don't want to be like *that*."

"You're hard to please."

"I want to get a good technique but not be ruined by it. Almost everybody flunks *that* test." It was an echo of the immature, pedantic tone that she had disliked in the afternoon.

"Do you think you can pass it?"

"I'm going to try."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, for one thing, I'm not going to get married."

"Why not?" She did not like this, and wished for a moment she had not gone walking with him. He could be insufferable.

"Because I want to be free! If you marry early, you're a goner."

"But if you make the right kind of marriage you can be really free. A young man who begins life with no money can't be free. He has to take the best job that is offered him. And so he gets swallowed up by it. Do you speak French? There's a lot to be said for the girl's having a *dot*, a dowry."

"Where would I get a dowry?"

"A man like you could get anything."

"Anything but money. It was hard enough to get enough for my education out of my father. And now he's dead, and there's a big legal fight about his will. Maybe I'll never get anything more."

"A man like you could get money."

"What do you mean?"

"Easily."

"I don't move in those circles. There are lots of rich girls, but I haven't a chance to see them. Anyway, I don't think that's the answer."

"You're a gifted man. You need help. Don't be so American. It's just nonsense to expect a young doctor to make his own way."

He was silent for a moment. The lights of a vessel setting out for Europe appeared across the calm waters of the open sea. Above them, on a dune, a fat hawkmoth sipped with his long tongue the nectar of an evening primrose which had straggled among beach plums near the water's edge.

"No, no marriage for me," he said decisively. "Not for a long time. There are too many things I want to do. Europe. I've never been there."

But now her plans were getting clearer. They spent two hours on the beach. He was encouraged to talk about himself and his plans, and she found enough eager questions to keep him going, even when he threatened to become quite pedantic and dull. Under the silent pressure of her intelligence and her training at her uncle's table, he overcame most of his immaturity and talked well and humbly. Also, he continued to avoid flirtatiousness when he walked her home and went indoors to collect his papers and said good-night. Long afterwards, with the wit that came to her under the pressure of theatrical competition, she said gaily of herself that night that she had been "undone on a dune", but that was not true. A week later, however, they did become lovers, meeting in the cobwebby loft of a barn on the Polish potato farm behind her property, and he poured out his heart to her and confirmed her first intuitions of the almost religious, actually frightening sensuality that lay concealed behind his stern self-control, but until their first embrace she had had no evidence of it. She had not known the extent to which he was moved by

allurements that she had begun to forget and to neglect: her perfume, the *clic* of her clothes, her long fingers. His embraces knew no restraints. He resembled the hero of *An American Tragedy* in his helpless poor boy's adoration of a rich woman's well-tended body. He could not talk of such things, and when she did he silenced her. They seemed to be part of a wordless faith that lay at the centre of his nature, the name of a deity that must never be uttered. And when she disparaged her family because they had never worked for their living, it was apparent by his silence that he could not condemn either the idleness or the injustice that had been necessary to produce such delights for his senses.

"Every other woman is so crude," he told her, and the tribute, which came so spontaneously, both pleased and troubled her. She enjoyed his adoration, but—

Her struggle with the Bouviers began. As a bargainer, everything was against her, if they had only known, but she succeeded in getting a clear title to the house, as well as a nice round sum and a Reno divorce, with all expenses paid, before they woke up to the fact that she was pregnant. She found that she enjoyed this kind of intrigue more than she expected. In the autumn she married David. Late in the spring Peter was born, and there were a few wisecracks that made her laugh heartily when she was alone, although she pretended in public not to notice them. David actually did not notice them. To him his marriage was sacred and above such petty jeering. Also, he had more practice in ignoring public opinion. But she enjoyed her dramatic break with the society that had formerly welcomed her, and regarded her adventure with the Bouviers as a highly successful operation, one which, if she had been a general, would have been described as a great victory. While legal proceedings were dragging and the issue looked doubtful, she took some bright knives out from the kitchen to the side porch and practised throwing

them at a Nickolas Muray photograph of Mrs. Bouvier—with very pleasant accuracy. By that time she was certainly not ‘a naïve convent girl’ any more, although she was still far from the hardheadedness that she was to develop years later when she stopped being merely a wife and mother and accepted a walk-on offer from the East Hampton summer theatre and thus began her professional career.

But twenty-two years had passed and now it was 1850 and she had been on the stage for over a decade. Peter had received his diploma from Harvard, she found a white hair among the black now and then, and David was far away. She was waking up on a pleasant June morning, but she had not slept well, and she had had an unpleasant dream about Mrs. Bouvier which had called her back as she had been in 1858, although now of course she was long since dead. But in the dream she had been still alive—and threatening.

“When are you going to pay the rent?” she demanded in the dream. “The rent! The rent!” She had been more terrifying in fiction than in life.

The nice part about the dream was David. It was pleasant to recall a time when they were not separated, when she had not been disappointed in him, when he still was the solid rock in her life and sustained her quietly.

Even in the dream he had sustained her. “Don’t pay it!” he had advised about the rent. “She’s an old windbag.”

Now she lay in bed, in 1850, on a lovely morning, and felt heartsick, and wished he were home and everything patched up between them—when the door of her bedroom opened gently. Someone came in without knocking.

It was Nancy Whitlock, in a pink dressing-gown. “Are you awake?” she whispered, putting a stubby hand on Carlotta’s pillow. She had the same conspiratorial air that she had had the night before, with an occasional glance over her shoulder to see if her observant daughter knew what she was up to.

Carlotta felt outraged. To encounter Nancy at that moment brought her back to the present and made her contrast herself unpleasantly at forty-three with herself at twenty-one. "You?" she said unwelcomingly.

"I just wanted to see you," Nancy protested, almost as if she were a girl herself, instead of being the head of a prosperous firm and the mother of a girl of college age, who was sleeping down the hall in another bedroom.

"You might at least knock."

"But darling, it was only because——"

"I do wish you'd leave me alone. Didn't I make it clear last night that I'm not——"

"Darling, don't talk to me like that!" Nancy was whimpering. "I can't stand it. I didn't sleep a wink. You just mustn't talk to me like that. I can't take it. I wanted to slip in here and tell you——"

"A good thing you didn't," Carlotta observed grimly.

"But darling——!"

There was a sound of a car entering the driveway.

"That must be Peter! And Gillham. I wish you'd go."

But Nancy was still there when Pete appeared, followed by Gillham. Nothing could dislodge her, not even the most pointed suggestion. The business woman's toughness that lay behind her pretence of being a whimpering schoolgirl made her stand her ground.

The scene that followed was a little too much for Carlotta. When Peter went to his room without speaking to her, she felt forlorn, and with a sudden rush of energy that was enough to penetrate both of their thick skins she got rid of Nancy and Gillham, summoned Ticky by bell and told her to take all telephone calls and not to disturb her all day about *anything*.

She vowed she would stay in her room all day, and eat nothing for lunch.

"The only person I could talk to is David," she said to herself regretfully, accusingly, "and he's not here."

And he would not only serve as a *vis-à-vis*, he would quickly get her out of herself. He had always known how to take a decisive action—usually determined, persuasive love-making—that roused her from her self-doubts. In his presence she would lose her recurrent fear that there was something dreadfully wrong with her, that she might be, ever so slightly, mad. He challenged, she responded—that was why he was so good for her. Often he infuriated her, but always he made her feel alive and singularly *capable*.

If he had been lying next to her now, she would simply have melted against him. Even in '45, when he had seriously angered her, she had been unable to resist his incredible persuasiveness. In fact, it had frightened her. Perhaps she merely wished to be a child when he was near, and of course that was all wrong, but how she longed for it!

"I'd just let go," she said to herself intoxicatingly. "He could take over. Yes! That's what I want!"

## IV

### THE SHORTS OF ITHACA

LATER Carlotta said she should have known that David would return that day. During the last few years she had begun to believe in telepathy as fervently as she had begun, to believe in astrology, and certainly there had been enough signs of his imminence: first, the dream and the long tender reverie which followed it, and then the events of a singularly prophetic day.

She was not permitted to stick to her plan to stay in her room. While she lay on her bed and rubbed eau-de-

Cologne on her forehead, regretting having invited her guests and wishing 'to see no one, convinced that she was regarded as a mere entertainer, and worse, by her son, a telephone call came, and Ticky wisely brought word of it to her door. She answered it because it came from a gentleman farmer whose land, with an informality typical of East Hampton, began abruptly behind her barn-garage, Mr. Higginbotham, a strange man who had once voted Communist—the only ballot so marked in the whole village—and had bought Soviet gold bonds. He was handsome in a broad-domed, boyish-eyed way, the son of a university president, who had inherited some money from Ohio farm property and believed it 'ought to go back into the land'. He had therefore bought a prosperous potato farm at a high price from a Pole named Czerwinski and quickly transformed it into a steady source of loss. Everything went wrong for him. He could never keep any help. When he discovered that he was losing money on the milk produced by his six cows, he bought twenty-four more, and quintupled his deficits, besides being obliged to buy pasture land at a staggering figure. He had once written an amusing letter to the *East Hampton Star* which calculated neatly the exact amount of money he lost on each bottle of milk that his customers were good enough to buy from him. Recently he had been trying to milk his cows himself, having reduced the herd to its original number, but his hour of rising got later and later, until his morning milking took place at ten o'clock, and his evening milking at midnight. The complaints of the unhappy beasts troubled the entire countryside. To the natives of East Hampton it was one more example of the unbelievable stupidity of 'summer people', for he belonged to that class, though he stayed the whole year round. The stupidity of the summer people usually went unpunished, because of their money, but in his case justice appeared to be at hand.



The telephone call meant that he was at last ready to sell at a price she was willing to pay. Such an opportunity offered her a welcome occasion to outwit a bad mood by activity. Grateful for it, for both financial and emotional reasons, she quickly slipped on a dress, put her cheque-book in her purse, as well as a paper prepared by her lawyer, and walked through her own back yard to his barn, where he had said he would meet her. She felt better now, with the clear-headed self-possession, the keen enjoyment of an impending struggle of wits that filled her lithe, well-exercised body when she went to the rehearsal of a new play or to a gambling place.

"*Je raffole des luttes,*" she observed to herself, although for years she had thought—and dreamt—in English, reserving her French for the fewer and fewer occasions when she saw French people. "And this barn is important, historic. This is where David and I first were together." At the same time she knew that David disapproved of her passion for real estate.

She was curious about the loft of the barn, wishing to revisit it, which she had not done in twenty-two years, and asked Mr. Higginbotham to show it to her. It looked as beautiful, as romantic as ever. Old harness was festooned with spider webs. A collection of sea-shells spilled out of a glass-fronted bookcase. The floor was covered with deep stacks of old copies of *The New Masses*, *The Daily Worker*, and *La Vie Parisienne*.

Mr. Higginbotham was chewing a long blade of grass. He kept raising a hand to hide a yawn. "Excuse me," he said several times, as if trying to alert himself to forgotten gallantries now that he was in the presence of a beautiful actress whom he had seen on television. His wife, it was known in Fast Hampton, had complained that "he spends so much time with his animals that he's turning into one."

"I don't know whether this ought to be kept as a barn, or turned into a summer cottage," said Carlotta, with an

intuition that his uncouthness might, through his shame of it, be used to get a lower price out of him.

"I thought I'd turn it into a cottage," said Mr. Higginbotham, "and we started working on it. See that wall over there?" He pointed to the other side of the loft. "Funniest thing. We found carvings on that wall. When we scraped away the dirt and the mildew and the paint. And there's a date on them, 1784. One of them is a frigate and the other is a schooner. They're correct down to the last sail. Maybe an old sailor did them. Scrimshaw. He could see the sea from that window, of course."

"Really?" said Carlotta with interest. "Carvings?" She walked towards them. "They look like bas-relief—"

She was grabbed roughly by the shoulder. "Look out!" He pulled her back, even in his excitement seeming to enjoy his closeness to her. "My God, if you'd have gone six inches further you'd have fallen through that floor."

"Fallen through?"

Sweat broke out on his forehead. He kept his hand on her shoulder. "Yes. We opened up that floor. Some antique dealer offered me twenty-five dollars for a buggy we used to have around here. We couldn't get it out the window, it was too big. I don't know how they ever got it up here. So we cut a hole in that floor and the beams below. And let it down that way. But we never could get that floor right afterwards. I almost fell through it too. In fact, I did fall through it, part way at least. Almost broke my leg. Just remembered it in time. But you—you would have fallen all the way through."

She trembled with fright, as his story revealed one more example of an unfitness that, in this case, might have injured her instead of himself. "Why, I could have been killed!" she exclaimed, pulling away from his grasp.

"I'll say you could!" He laughed heartily.

She shuddered with distaste, and decided to offer two thousand dollars less than she had intended to offer. "I'd

like to go downstairs," she said. "Are the stairs safe?"

"Oh, yes. You came up them, didn't you?" And as she felt her way downstairs he said cheerily, "You know, I wrote a play myself. Maybe you'd like to look at it."

When she reached the ground she told him that the property had been gravely injured by just such things as the hole cut in the barn floor, and that she could not offer as much for it as she had hoped to. It just wasn't worth as much to her. In the end, after acting as if she had been revolted by his almost bestial coarseness, she got him to accept a small cheque as a down payment on the property, and returned to her room with a paper signed by him, and lay down again. She felt better now, as she felt when she came home from a good game of poker, at which she seldom lost. And there was no saturation of unpleasant cigarette smoke in her clothes or her lungs. She fell asleep.

The surest sign of David's imminence, however, came in the late afternoon, and if she had had her wits about her, or had merely trusted her own suspicions, she would have known what was up. His uncle from Sag Harbor, an elderly man who wore a suit of black Donegal homespun, with flecks of red and green, and yellow and blue in it, paid her a visit, after years of silence, and supposedly about an old pine highboy in her own barn, but really about something else. Tim was his name, though she hadn't known it at first. David had sent him, naturally, but although she dimly guessed the truth, she had not been able to put two and two together. She had not seen through the stratagem of the wily man she was married to. She had merely been re-aroused to desire his return and to forget his faults.

While she talked to his old uncle, who must have been over seventy, with a face that had grown gaunt with approaching death, her guests and Peter came back from the beach. She was sitting in her living-room then, and drinking a cup of Formosa tea with old Tim, who ended every sentence with a disturbingly respectful 'ma'am'. It was after

six o'clock, and time for cocktails. When Tim left, a party began. But the reminder he had brought of David, and the seriousness she always felt when she thought of David, caused her to be still more critical of her guests than she had been in the morning.

Gillham made the cocktails. He was fussy about the measurements of liquor, and took pride in the driest gibbon ever stirred. His proprietary air, his habit of slipping his short hairy arm about her waist and declaring "I love her!" was annoying, and she wished at such times that he would stick to his silly anglicisms, and she also knew that the moment was not long distant when she would have to tell him that merely because he had put money into her last show he need not imagine that he was ever going to get to first base. The chief purpose of inviting him for the week-end, in fact, had been to let him know this as subtly and as painlessly as possible, and in such a way that when another likely script came along he would again be willing to come in on it. He could be very amusing when he told cold-blooded stories of how he seduced Powers models or courted old mill-owners and got them to let him underwrite their stock issues, and he had helped her make three or four investments that had uniformly paid off, and of course he could not be blamed for trying, but some of his habits, especially his crude attempts to put his hands on her, got on her nerves and the time might be at hand when he would have to be, regretfully of course but firmly, Told Off.

Nancy too was heading for a show-down. She had certainly been a very pleasant source of goods either free or wholesale, and she had redecorated both the house in East Hampton and the apartment on 62nd Street at no profit to herself, but she had little to offer outside of her business ability, which had drained off any personality she had once possessed, and she wavered between equally unpleasant extremes of irritability and kittenishness. Also, her Les-

bianism was getting to be too well known, in spite of the skilful use she had made of her husband and daughter as screens. She wore a pale pink linen dress that went well with her dark hair and her soft, hour-glass figure. She was making a great fuss over both Peter and Gillham. Part of her act was to gush or whimper like a girl of fifteen, although she was almost three times that. The time was at hand when she would have to take her tricks somewhere else. Especially after last night.

Her husband Cyril, in grey slacks and discreet herring-bone tweeds, looked every bit as distinguished and almost as youthful as he had been when he was in love with Carlotta, ten years earlier. He was now a full professor at Princeton, but he did n't seem nearly as happy as he had been when he occupied a much less important place at Dartmouth. A Walter Pideon weariness had settled on his tall and bony frame. The new look that had come for a while into his eye after his conversion to the Church was no longer there, and for the first time in his life he showed signs of irritability, which was a real pity because he was by nature a gentle and lovable man. He complained that the nearness of his new j 'y to New York had spoilt his tranquillity, which was merely his gentlemanly way of saying that Nancy was making him miserable and he didn't have enough nerve to go out and have a love affair. When he had been in love with Carlotta he had been much more dashing, but it had always been clear to her that at the big moment he would avoid committing himself to any consequences of his brief passion. That was why there had never been any big moment, and why she could endure him now with an affectionate contempt. It would have been ridiculous to expect any more from the sensitive scion of such an excellent New England family. His escape into the Church had been determined long before and failed utterly to impress her, because she had been a Catholic from birth. If he had had some talent he might have con-

tributed to his tradition of decadent elegance, in the manner of Henry James and Henry Adams and T. S. Eliot. As it was, everyone agreed that he was a very good teacher of literature. There were similar men, of course, in France, and they could be very attractive. But none of them would ever have the courage to renounce their aristocratic inheritance, as she had done, and go out and make a career among the stinking, stupid, fascinating plebeians. That was why she despised his kind of man.

The most interesting member of the Whitlock family was the daughter, Cyrilla. Peter had obviously taken a shine to her, and she had helped to get him out of the dumps. She was about his age, and decidedly pretty, in a sort of Emily Brontë way—dark, poetic hair and large ardent eyes and sloppy about her clothes; she wore shorts and a sweat-shirt—and she appeared to be quite a star in the intellectual life of Bennington College. Two or three of her poems had been printed in highbrow magazines. In some new psychological test she had got one of the highest I.Q.s ever recorded—193 out of a possible 200.

The only genuine celebrity there—and the only guest who gave Carlotta real pleasure—was Dimitri Spartas, or Greco, as she and everyone else in the theatre called him. He had not been expected as a guest. Two days ago he called long-distance from Hollywood to say that he had heard that Representative Dickson, the new member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, was going to spend the week-end at East Hampton, as the guest of the publisher Carlton Miles. Greco wondered if Carlotta knew Miles, and if she could arrange for him to meet the Congressman. Carlotta had said that she knew Carlton well and also had met the Congressman, and would be glad to arrange an introduction. Nothing more was said on the phone, of course, but she was glad to be able to do him a favour. She had liked working with him in two Broadway shows, and she would like to work with him again.

It had been easy to call Dolly Miles and arrange to bring her guests over on Sunday. They had also been invited for Saturday, but on Thursday Carlotta had not been sure that Greco would be able to get to East Hampton in time, and so she had accepted the invitation for Sunday.

It was good to have Greco under her roof. He had contributed also to the better spirits of Peter. He always knew how to talk to young people. He still looked like one, although he was now forty-two. There was no grey in his bushy head of black hair, and his stubby Greek peasant's legs looked as impressive as they had been when she had first met him back in the Depression.

He was so painstaking. He was giving as much time and effort to making Peter like him as he would have given to get some star to understand a leading part in a picture. If he was doing a tenement story, he always looked first at the actors' fingernails, to see if they really were grimy. And Peter was actually smiling and opening up, no longer the hurt, jealous boy who had been so rude in the morning, though of course Cyrilla must also have had something to do with his new sociability. But Greco had a special feeling for youth, someone had said the same thing when he was given his Oscar, and he did love scenes with kids in them better than grown-up ones. Carlotta had often wondered if he would be able to help her much, if he were directing her in a play, now that she could not hope to play the part of any woman supposed to be younger than thirty. She respected his directing, except in mature rôles. He was what some critic had called a youth-worshipper.

Gillham cared a great deal about food, although of course he didn't *know* as much about it as Cyril, and he was asking Carlotta if she was going to give him any more of that marvellous Chicken Pompadour when the telephone rang in the butler's pantry and Peter went to answer it.

She talked food with Gillham and Greco, who said scorn-

fully that a good steak was all he wanted, and no fancy French sauces on it either. She told Greco she would have a surprise for him at dinner. He had been antagonistic towards the Wall Street man all afternoon. Both of them were small, and both of them were tough, and both of them were rich. And their politics were completely opposed.

Carlotta asked Gillham to make a vermouth cassis for her. One drink was all she ever allowed herself in one evening. Otherwise she ate more than was good for her, and put on weight. If she didn't drink, she could keep down to 120, which for her five feet six was very good.

Peter was gone a long time, and she assumed the call was for him, but she had begun to sip her drink when he came back and told her that she was wanted on the phone. There was a strange smile on his face.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Father," he said quietly. It was the first time he had addressed her directly since the morning.

"Your father!"

"Yes."

"*Tu plaisantes!*"

"No, it's Father, and he's in New York. He wants to come out here tomorrow."

She hurried to the telephone, trying to close the door after her. When it swung open again, everyone stopped talking. It was plain that her guests did not mind listening to what she said. And being confronted with an audience, she decided with a swiftness born of many emergencies on the stage, to make the best of it.

"David! Is it really you? Where are you? Can't you borrow one? Well, rent one! How are you? Really? Do you mean it? No! Of course not! I mean it! The first thing! As soon as you can. I'll be waiting." And then she went over most of it twice again. But she kept her language simple. She had learned that it was more effective



in big scenes to be very, very simple. Fancy language had a way of kicking back. The audience would imagine that the words were much more wonderful, much more poetic than they really had been. It was all in the feeling you put into them.

More than her audience knew, she disliked this kind of disciplined exhibitionism, especially at a moment when she wished to pour out an over-crowded heart, but she had long since reconciled herself to it as an indispensable task of her profession. Once you started to be 'pure' or artless in front of others, even when you were miles from a stage, you were done for. A single moment of girlish simplicity, and the labour of years might be carelessly unravelled. Your mask must never be dropped. Some actresses went to extremes and never ceased playing a part; their falsity became proverbial and their crack-ups rather sensational. But there was a middle course between sincerity and style which she sought, and when she found it she did not think she had to feel ashamed. Few bystanders, however, seemed remotely aware of this hidden drama that lay behind every word and every gesture of a true professional. Peter merely resented it and made no attempt to understand it. Even David, though he perceived it with his unfailing insight, had never fully reconciled himself to it. He took too literary, too moralistic a view of the theatre, and because her plays were nearly always trivial, now that she had graduated from the experimental theatre to expensive productions on Broadway, he believed that she would do well to devote so much energy and so much cunning to worthier objectives. He could not appreciate the beauty, the distinction of being an artist when the material you had to work with, as you knew very well, was trash. He had been spoiled by the dignity of science.

But his news, and the way she had received it, made her nervous. She finished off her drink in one swallow when she went back to her guests, and without giving them a

chance to make awkward comments proposed that they go to the side porch and play a game of darts. Whenever she had a serious problem she liked to throw darts. If there was money on the game, her hand had to be steady, and when her hand became steady, so did her mind. She had spent whole days on the porch throwing darts, in '45, when David had given her so much trouble. And now he was coming back again.

She proposed that they play for a dollar a point, and Gillham and Greco, who had never played with her, agreed at once. Nancy said, "I think I'll just watch," and shook her head when Cyril took up a dart. 'Well,' thought Carlotta, 'I might as well be making some money while I'm calming down.'

Pete did not go with the others to the porch. He had not believed that his father's telephone call came from New York. It had not been preceded by the usual questions of the long-distance operator. He believed it was a local call, especially when his thrifty father showed no inclination to speed it up, but talked in a leisurely way both to Pete and his mother. But if it was a local call, where on Long Island was his father likely to be? Of course! The logical place was Sag Harbor, especially since old Tim had paid them a visit that afternoon, after staying away for years. Something was up.

Pete decided to go to Sag Harbor and see for himself. He wanted to talk to him, to make sure that he really existed. The last time he had seen him he had not even been in college, and now he was twenty-one and a college graduate. The nights of schoolboy loneliness and tears were over, almost unbelievable now, but the ache that had caused them was still there. He had never felt as close to any class-mate as he did to his father, and this, he gathered at college, was very rare. But his father's letters seemed as removed from his daily life as works of fiction.

It had been hard to leave Cyrilla. He had been surprised by her. What a shame that, though their parents were familiar, he had never met her before! The day they had spent together, mostly on the beach, had been unexpectedly eventful. At first they had sparred with each other, and then, when each had won the other's respect, they had walked away from the others and, lying side by side in the sun, with cool minds and grilled bodies, had begun a comparison of their relations with their respective parents that astonished them by their similarities. Both of them had parents that were still quite young and already quite successful. And both of them loved their fathers and had little use for their mothers.

He had never met a girl who was completely at war with every accepted standard. She had a poet's scorn for mere appearances. Without carping or pettiness she managed to be devastating. He had thought he was hard to fool, but he was afraid that she had even greater powers of criticism. She had made such shocking revelations about her mother that he had been on the point of telling her what he had discovered about his own, when the others called to them. It was time to go home.

But she would still be there when he came back. The chances were that he was merely imagining his father's visit to Sag Harbor, that he had missed the operator's preamble. And so in a few minutes, while they were still eating dinner, he would come back. And then he would take her dancing in Southampton, as he had promised. But first he wanted to test his hunch.

The amazement of the guests at the precision of his mother's dart-throwing was still in his ears as he opened up her new Ford on the macadam turnpike that led to Sag Harbor. He had had a couple of drinks, to keep up with Cyrilla, who had seemed so serious during the day and then after six o'clock had poured down highballs that were more whisky than water. He took curves at sixty miles an hour.

Telemachus must have felt the same eagerness as he slipped away from the hated suitors and went to Pylos in search of his father. 'So the swift black ship clove her way across the wine-dark sea.'

## V

### HALF-WAY MORALIST

OLD T. J. O'Connor was seventy-two, with greenish eyes deceptively respectful. His father had been a harpooner on one of the sailing vessels that set forth from Sag Harbor in quest of spermaceti before the Civil War, and his grandfather had been a dissatisfied non-commissioned officer in the British Army who had emigrated to America in the 1840s. About thirty years later, when whaling became unprofitable, his father had established a little retail grocery store on Union Street in Sag Harbor, not far from the tiny fort that was captured for a short while during the Revolution by the Americans from the British. A struggle for independence had been part of T. J.'s background, and although he had risen no higher in the social scale than his father or grandfather, he had inherited from them a pride that was nonetheless strong because obliged by circumstances to be prudent. In the village he was admired first as one of the rare Irishmen who never got drunk, and second as an exceptionally self-reliant, decent neighbour who never gossiped and never asked favours.

He was the brother of David's mother, and he had been a caretaker of the estate owned by David's father. When David's mother had died he had moved back into the family tiny pink house surrounded by an ever-blooming garden of his own creation, which had been built in 1750,

on Union Street. Now he lived in retirement, on money deposited every Saturday for thirty years in the Sag Harbor Savings Bank to which he added a few hundred dollars each summer by taking fishing parties out into the bay. When he was sixty-four he had lost his wife. For eight years he had been living alone, but his house was still as neat as it had been when his wife was alive. Once a year it was thrown open to tourists because it was considered historic and its colonial innocence had been innocently preserved.

As a boy David had called him Uncle Tim, but now he called him Tim. The two had corresponded regularly during the War and during the four and a half years following the War when David had lived abroad. There had been a hint in David's last letter, sent from Calcutta, and so his uncle was not greatly surprised when he picked up the receiver on Saturday morning and heard that his nephew had reached the United States, and would be coming home that evening.

"I'd like to stay with you tonight. I don't want to go to East Hampton until tomorrow. Is that all right?"

"Come ahead," said Tim.

"Will you go over to East Hampton for me today, and find out how things are? Make up any excuse you like. I'd like to know."

"Right!" said Tim, although the prospect of the errand gave him no pleasure. David's father had also counted on his ability to understand things with a minimum of explanation and to take on disagreeable tasks.

"Will you meet me at the evening train?"

"That I will."

"At Bridgehampton?"

"Right!"

Tim received his nephew's requests as if they were commands. He decided now, with some pleasure, as he hung up the receiver, that David had become still more impres-

sive than his father, before him. The older Holderness, the financier in whose presence railroad presidents and New York bankers had fidgeted nervously while he lectured them over a silver dish of kidneys at the breakfast table, while Tim, on his knees, looked after the new tulips from Holland—the booted, purple-veined great man, known for his resolute character, had never achieved the serenity that his son appeared to have won. As a captain of industry, surrounded by enemies, he had been obliged to maintain a formidable presence. David, on the other hand, on his way perhaps to more lasting renown and under less moral strain while he won it, had chosen a career which permitted him to grow gentle and mellow. Science had trained the fire of his strong will upon nature, rather than upon competitors. Events had proved him wiser than his father.

Also, the elder Holderness had been ashamed of his relations with Tim's sister, as well as of David's illegitimate birth. He had not once referred to these matters, and he had carried off the various embarrassments they caused with remarkable silence, but he had never quite succeeded in subduing the guilt he felt in the presence of the brother of his mistress, even while he gave him an unfailing Christmas present of a cheque for five hundred dollars. Each time he called in the black-tweedcd Tim before the crackling log fire to squeeze his arm heartily and thank him for his services, there had been a touch of shame in his savage eye over the dark deed which had brought David into the world.

And Tim had hoped but never expected to see David, whose diapers he had often pinned and unpinned, to match his sire in assertiveness. There might be too much of the O'Connor mildness in the boy, he had feared; the same mildness, combined with ineffective protest, that had kept Tim's father a sailor before the mast, that kept Tim himself from pursuing the career that he really desired, that

turned the beautiful Rose O'Connor into a fallen woman.

But the great James Clinton Holderness had given off the reek of the conquering male even while he discussed flowers learnedly and elegantly. Tim never forgot his own terror when he was summoned into the presence of his employer two days after he had been engaged as a gardener. At the time he had no suspicion that his job had followed the seduction of his sister. He merely heard the cold, precise instructions that were directed at him about some rare shrubs that had been imported from Japan, and disliked his master with Irish intensity. That was before he had to wrestle with his resentment and decide to stay on in the much better position to which he was quickly promoted, before he prudently perceived that his social destiny would never permit him to speak his mind, and before he learned to admire his boss. In those days he still longed to pass his days among books rather than among herbs and ground cover, thought of trying to get a librarian's job, and wished he had never returned from the trip he had made as a deck-hand to Ireland, where he had visited his uncle in a monastery and heard the grand tales of literary men.

He knew that his sister had been sewing in East Hampton for Mrs. Holderness, a sickly, childless lady who yet outlived her hearty, muscular husband and would never give him a divorce. But he did not know that Rose had been driven home in the smart trap of the financier, over the winding seven-mile turnpike that led to Sag Harbor, or that they had fallen in love. Later for a time Tim believed the story that his sister wanted both him and herself to believe: that even if the desperately ill Mrs. Holderness did not die, which was unthinkable, she would surely seize the opportunity to divorce him because more than a million dollars went with it, and then he would marry Rose. After a while Tim knew this to be a fiction that Rose needed for her peace of mind, especially when

the financier no longer visited her from one year's end to another and merely sent a monthly cheque for the maintenance of her son.

Later David, who had grown up sitting among the O's in schoolrooms as an O'Connor, was legally adopted by his father and, although he continued to live in Sag Harbor, given the name of Holderness. But the only reason was that David had demanded it. He had gone to his father and demanded it. This had happened as the time approached for him to go to college, and the incident of the scandalous cheer on the football field had helped. But his father had already shown his respect for the boy—and his desire to right the injustice to him. This injustice had been only partially righted when death, in the form of cancer of the stomach, suddenly overtook his father. David received in all about twenty thousand dollars from him during his lifetime, but the contest over the will had dragged on until 1930, when, owing to the Stock Market collapse, there was nothing more to fight about.

David's childhood was one of constant struggle, of many fist-fights. An unpleasant word which he deserved was thrown at him repeatedly. He grew more and more determined to maintain his dignity as his legs grew in length and his trousers reached his ankles. His uncle soon ceased worrying about his assertiveness, and feared he would never go beyond it. He made his place on the athletic field and in the classroom, although he became sufficiently self-critical around the age of seventeen to learn that he practised sports more for self-vindication than for enjoyment, and so gave them up when he went to college. He later attributed the extraordinary clarity that was often observed in him to his discovery, before he was five years old, that no matter where he looked he found only chaos in the world.

"I got used to that idea," he said later, "and it has never left me." At sixteen he stopped going to mass and began



a series of religious arguments at the dinner table with his uncle, who finally took consolation in the remark, "You'll come back to the Church some day."

David was only twenty when he married Carlotta in a civil ceremony. Tim did not meet her, nor did David's mother, until a few days before the young couple went to the Municipal Building in New York for the licence and the wedding. It was one more subject on which Tim was obliged by circumstances to be discreet. David had slipped away from him into the ranks of the almighty summer people, and could no longer confide in his own family. Carlotta made no attempt to become familiar with them, which would have been impossible anyway. She reminded Tim of a connoisseur of rare furniture who had found just the item she wanted in an out-of-the-way place and got off the premises with her treasure as quickly as possible. Tim did not like her, but he was never able to say so to David, even in later years when it was obvious that she had injured David seriously. In those days Tim felt that David was being punished by a stern God for a youthful sin, but although the uncle's attitude became clear, it never expressed itself in language to which exception might be taken. And David had not once complained of her. He behaved always like a devoted husband and went out of his way to praise her. He may have left the Church, but he certainly took his unsolemnised marriage with religious seriousness. The lack of a legal father had filled him with a conservative respect for the married state that his pious uncle, who would have applauded it under other conditions, found entirely excessive.

As for David's mother, she hardly ever exchanged two words with Carlotta. She always managed to be standing up when her daughter-in-law came into the room, as if she were her servant. And there was a kiss on the cheek at the time of the wedding, but never anything more.

David always wrote his mother when he was away in

Europe, and visited her once a week when he was at East Hampton. He sent her dresses from New York and took her out with him to the very best restaurants. She died five or six years after his marriage, and David, who had arranged to have her treated by a good doctor in Southampton, hurried from New York to be at her bedside. Carlotta, however, was ill at the time, and could not go to the funeral. She had caught a cold attending a Communist rally in New York which denounced the conditions of poor people. She sent some wonderful flowers.

The birth of Pete had meant the end of Carlotta's child-bearing. "She had to have an operation," David had confided, "or at any rate the surgeon thought so." David said she was a good mother, but, as far as Tim could see, all the work was done by Miss Ticknor, the nurse she brought over from England, and it was not long before she began to look for outside interests to keep her busy, and took some courses and began to get interested in the theatre. But it was a strange kind of theatre, mixed up with a strange kind of politics. These were also the years when David, having taken two doctorates, was beginning to teach and to write his first book. From the start he had attracted the interest of outstanding men, and had little trouble in getting grants from foundations. After worrying throughout his childhood and boyhood about the difficulties of getting money, he suddenly reached a point where he never had to think of it again.

By the time his first book was published he was already so well established in scientific habits of thought that he would smile when he encountered now and then, upon his annual return to East Hampton, a remark which meant, "Oh, I know all about you!" or, "I remember when your name was O'Connor."

It was then that his ageing uncle wished most that he had gone ahead with his own plans to be a librarian. If education could do that for a man, it was what a man

needed. He had never witnessed such indifference to village cruelty.

David was called O'Connor on several occasions, and did nothing to correct it. "That will go on after I'm dead and buried," he said, laughing. His former assertiveness had taken a curious turn, and he enjoyed jokes on himself more than any other kind. A defensive modesty had developed alongside his absorption in his work, and instead of being a weakness it was a strength.

"The doctor at the hospital said I ought to be proud I am related to him, Father. He's after becoming a big man, the doctor said," Tim told Father Devlin, with not a little family pride, as they stood outside St. Andrew's one Sunday morning after mass, when a winter sun gave no warmth at all. "He knows what's going on in people's minds."

"But he doesn't go to mass," said Father Devlin.

"No, Father, he doesn't," Tim admitted.

David's career went forward without interruption, or at least it seemed to, until Pete was about eight or nine years old, when Carlotta's name and picture appeared in the newspapers, especially the tabloids, as the companion of a well-known labour leader, who was suspected of being a member of the Communist Party, on an automobile ride that ended in the accidental death of a child. There were also rumours in the gossip column that David was going to divorce her, but this was obviously untrue. David had nothing but good to say of her when he came to the funeral of Tim's wife, early in 1842, wearing a major's uniform and about to be sent to England on a special mission. It was the first time Tim had had a chance to talk to him in years. They sat up late, just the two of them, after everyone else had gone, drinking Irish whisky together and talking of old times. What David said did not entirely make sense. It seemed contradictory. He said that he felt Carlotta had lost respect for him. He also said that he should have been firmer in the expression of his views on

political matters. She now agreed with him, although once she had completely disagreed with him. When Tim suggested discreetly that she might have been bad for his scientific career—this was what the doctor at the hospital now believed and had expressed to Tim—David replied that without what he had learned from her he would on the contrary have been a very routine kind of scientist, that if he had written anything that had real insight, it was because of her, and anyway he might not have written anything at all if it had not been for her.

So he went off to war praising her, although he did not seem especially sad about leaving his home. "I'm a man of peace, I've killed off the war in me systematically, but you have no idea how much I want to go to war."

And later, when he was in England, and sent Tim pictures of it, he wrote, ". . . still despecialising. Don't even mind the paper work. The fun is seeing all the things I used to miss. And what interests me most is getting used to a totally different situation every day."

He made almost no reference in his letters to Carlotta, who was acting on Broadway at that time, or to Pete, who was at school in Connecticut. Nor did he mention his promotions, though they were revealed on his envelopes. He made a trip to Russia by plane. Later he was shot down over Germany during a bombing raid on which he went as a medical observer, to study the actual conditions which contributed to the psychological problems of airmen. Tim received a message from him on a prisoner-of-war postcard.

David came home late in 1915. His appearance astonished his uncle. He looked much older, his hair was definitely grey, he had many crow's-feet, and he had lost fifteen pounds. He no longer seemed like an ex-athlete but like a scholar. He was tall but spare. His skull showed plainly beneath his close-cropped hair, and the highly disciplined thoughts that went on beneath it seemed

almost visible. The Holderness assertiveness was now definitely a thing of the past, and the desperate ambition of an illegitimate child had become a pale memory. The Holderness habit of over-intensity was still as manifest in him as it had been in his father, who had burned himself out before he had reached fifty-five, but it had taken a gentler form.

On the other hand, he had a much more decisive plan of action than before. The kind of boldness that hitherto had been manifested only in his writings—and in his first conversations with her, as Carlotta had more than once said, in a rather accusatory tone—now was part of the programme that he said he was going to follow in the post-war period. He had been impressed by the courage with which certain people abroad had met the threat of extinction during the War, and desired to imitate their moral vigour. His period of scholarly apprenticeship was over, and he wished to act upon the ideas he had assembled during his first thirty-seven years. He had reached the midway point in his life. The most important step that he proposed to take was to arrange with a foundation to get funds to establish a clinic laboratory in the country, and not far from his birthplace. It would be difficult, but he believed he could persuade the foundation. If a small community could be established in the country, where homeless children were helped to develop inner resources against urban over-stimulation, through the encouragement of a spontaneous *rapport* with nature, an opportunity would be provided to study the medical and psychological effects of systematic decentralisation. The plan might of course turn out badly, but on the other hand it might also prove scientifically valuable. He wanted to devote part of his time to it, while going on with his regular work in New York.

He mentioned this plan to Tim on the night of his arrival, which was a few days before Thanksgiving Day,

and invited him to come to their home in East Hampton, which had been kept open that autumn to welcome him home, for a turkey dinner on the holiday. Carlotta was with him, hanging on every word and telling him how well he looked. She had had the starring part in a play which had already opened on Broadway. It had been expected to have a good run, it was by a well-known author, but as she said, "it was too highbrow". She had not been able to get another part, and she seemed extremely dejected. David told her that she too had been a victim of the New York way of life, of the illness and psychological impoverishment which followed inevitably upon centralisation of industrial power. Why put herself at the mercy of the mindless drift of history? She ought to get out of the theatre, at least the New York kind of theatre. His remarks seemed to have a discouraging effect upon her; she said soon that she felt exhausted and would have to go to bed. Tim said good-night, but not before he had heard her complaining despondently that she did not know where to turn, life without the theatre would be impossible for her.

The next day she called Tim to tell him that they would not be able to see him for Thanksgiving dinner. David had met with an accident. He had fallen down the cellar stairs and broken a leg. He was in the hospital. Later, when Tim sat by his bedside, David took full blame for the accident upon himself, but Tim heard a woman who worked for them say that at first David had complained, when he was brought up from the cellar, that he had not been warned that the stairs had been entirely removed for repairing. At Carlotta's request he had gone to the cellar to get firewood, but she had neglected to tell him of the repair work that was being done.

When he was able to walk again he announced that he was cancelling his plans to establish a laboratory-clinic in the country, and had accepted an offer to go abroad and study psychomatic illnesses in different parts of the world.

He described the new project with almost as much enthusiasm as the other had aroused in him, and in a few weeks he was gone. Tim saw him briefly again before he left, when he seemed to be in good spirits and made a remark about a "half-way moralist" that Tim did not understand. He smiled self-satirically when he said it.

He was gone for almost four and a half years. There wasn't much news in his letters any more, although for the past year they had come from Asia. The very last, however, had dropped a hint, and so Tim wasn't altogether surprised when he heard his nephew's voice at the other end of the wire in New York in 1850, asking his old uncle to pay a visit to his wife in East Hampton and find out how things were at home.

When Tim put on his heavy Sunday jacket and waistcoat and went to see Carlotta it was plain that she had forgotten who he was. She greeted him with a warmth that seemed entirely unstudied and she talked brightly, but she avoided any mention of his name. He had long before got used to being treated by members of the summer colony as a 'native', the word used in the Hamptons much as it was also used, as he had learned during his days as a seaman, in the West Indies. He knew that she would remember him in time and would always speak of him with the greatest respect. But meanwhile he was uncomfortable. Her beauty, her animation only made it more difficult for him to be in her presence.

"Isn't it simply wonderful that you should have come here today. Of all days. Just when I had that dream. Sag Harbor, of course. And David! I was thinking of—what do you hear from him?"

"Why, nothing special, ma'am."

She studied him suspiciously. Had her professional expertness in dissimulation made her able to detect it readily in others? "Well, the next time you write him, tell him that I miss him. Be sure to do that."

"Why, yes, ma'am."

"Tim! Of course., How are you, Tim? How is the little pink house? How is your wife? I've often wondered if I could get her to come over here and do a little——"

"She passed away, ma'am."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. When did it happen? I didn't *know*. You should have told me. How did it——"

"I didn't want to trouble you, ma'am."

"But when did it——?"

He was very uncomfortable. "Oh, you were away just then, and there was so much doing about the War and all——"

"As long ago as that?" She looked like the kind that could face a problem when it came up. There wasn't anything weak about her. And she was so keen and trim and healthy, as if she took very good care of herself. She didn't look a day over thirty-two. "I *have* got out of touch. What is David really doing? His letters to me are so—— How is he? Is he ever coming back?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

Again she studied him suspiciously, started to speak, and stopped.

"I was over this way, ma'am, and I thought I'd look in on you. It's about the old highboy. The one upstairs in your barn. If you ever want to sell it, I think I know of someone who'd buy it from you. He couldn't pay more than fifty dollars for it, but——" He said all this with the anxious face that he also wore when he was examining his conscience before going to confession at St. Andrew's, where he would have been that same Saturday afternoon if it hadn't been for the telephone call.

"The next time you write him, tell him I miss him."

Just then her guests, with sand in their shoes and a healthy tan on their cheeks, appeared in the living-room, and he was on his feet, with his felt hat in his hand, and thanking her and saying good-bye and refusing a drink,



but she insisted on introducing him democratically to the guests, and begged him to stay on and have a drink, but he said he had to go. He knew it was getting on toward sixty, and David's train would be arriving at Bridgehampton at six forty-five, and that was seven or eight miles away.

"Think about the highboy, ma'am, and if you're interested, give me a ring. Here's my number." He pressed upon her a neat slip of paper, with his name printed on it in pencil and his telephone number.

Pete, who had often gone fishing with him, asked him to stay too, and walked out to the car with him and kept on talking and talking, although Tim glanced openly at his watch, and so he didn't get away until it was all of sixty. This worried him, he always drove slowly, and there was a lot of traffic on the Montauk Highway, and still he didn't want to be late for David's train.

The train had already arrived when he got to Bridgehampton station. Its Diesel engine breathed quietly. The mail was being unloaded in grimy pouches. He did not see David for a while, and no wonder, he had a black patch on his eye now, and he was talking to Jim Montgomery, the white-haired, grandfatherly conductor. There was a large canvas valise at David's feet, and a camel-skin briefcase, and both looked shabby. But so did he. He was wearing a mussed old grey flannel suit, which the heat of New York and the ride in a dirty coach had not helped. When he had come back from the War he had been trim, if thinned out, but now he looked, for the first time in his life, indifferent to his appearance. Also, not as healthy as he had been in '45. There was a distinct danger that he would burn himself even faster than his father had.

". . . what should I say?" Jim Montgomery was asking. "Should I tell her about this woman? It might kind of—well, hurt her after all these—"

"I couldn't tell you now. But come around and see me some time," David was saying.

"Well, tell me this," Jim Montgomery went on. "Why is it that she has—?"

David saw his uncle. "Tim! Good old Tim!" he shouted. And shook his hand. "Do you know my uncle, Jim? Mr. Montgomery, Mr. O'Connor." He seemed glad of the chance to escape from the questions of the conductor by introducing him to his uncle. But then he was always having to find means to escape from the confidences of local admirers. It had been the same way last time.

The two older men shook hands solemnly.

"Mr. O'Connor."

"Mr. Montgomery."

"How be you, Tim?"

"Not bad, Jim, and how about yourself?"

David laughed. "You two must have known each other for fifty years!" But he didn't seem to regret his ruse.

"Going on that. Well, so long, Doc, I'll be calling you up one of these days." The conductor shook hands with David and walked along the gravel path towards the baggage car, to see if the mail had been unloaded.

Tim seized the valise and would not yield it, permitting David to carry only his battered brief-case. He had done this on week-ends for guests arriving at the Holderness estate, and it seemed to be a point of pride with him to be able to do it still. David's pleas that he give it up went unheeded, and the old man staggered towards his car.

When he got to the car he asked, "Where do you wish to sit, sir? In back?"

"In front," said David, "and don't call me sir."

But a few seconds later Tim asked, "What happened to your eye, sir?"

"Listen, Tim, stop it," David pleaded. "You did that the last time too. You've simply got to get over it. Or I won't tell you."

"All right," Tim agreed. "What happened?"

"Oh, I made a mistake, I suppose. Or somebody did.

But one of the German patients wasn't searched thoroughly, and he hid a pencil on him, just an ordinary yellow pencil, and when I wasn't looking he let me have it."

"In the eye!"

"Well, he hit me in the throat too. But that didn't hurt as much."

"Can you see out of it?"

"Well, maybe some day, they say, if I have another operation. It was an old patient. I thought I knew him pretty well and could begin to talk to him frankly. He couldn't get well until he faced his part of the war guilt. I guess I underestimated his powers of resentment. Very stupid of me."

"In the eye!"

"Oh, I can't read as much, but I don't think I'd ever have got away for my trip to India if it hadn't been for this."

"You've changed."

"Yes? How have I changed?"

"Well, I don't know."

"Go on, speak out."

"Well, this time I think you're back to stay."

"How did you know?"

"I don't know, I just think you are."

"~~Did~~ you go to East Hampton?"

"Yes, sir."

"How is she? And Pete? Was he there?"

. Tim nodded, and then realising that perhaps his assent could not be seen, because he was diving and David might also be keeping his eyes on the road, said aloud, "I saw them. They both look fine. Better than you do."

"I never felt happier in my life," David insisted.

"You don't look it."

"But I am. I'm almost grateful to that German. He made me see better than I ever saw before."

Tim was silent, thinking with bitter disappointment that the O'Connor mildness had at last triumphed over the Holderness energy in the one member of his family who might have emerged in public triumph. Scientific prestige had nothing like the local tangibility of financial prestige.

David began to sing, "Oh Father, dear Father, come home to us now, the clock in the steeple's struck one!"

"What's that?" his uncle asked suspiciously.

"Oh, just something that I've been singing all day. Say, who owns that filling station? That's new."

"Cheezer Byers—I mean, his son."

"Cheezer? How is the old so-and-so? I beat hell out of him one day. Never did like him!"

"He passed away last winter."

David smiled self-satirically. "I guess I'd better find out what happened to them before I say anything." They were entering the outskirts of Sag Harbor. "Take me right into town, will you? I want to buy a magazine in Horace Britt's store."

"It isn't Horace's any more."

"No? Whose is it?" They chatted about local changes. And when they reached the centre of the village, and David got out of the car and met some old friends, most of whom now had potbellies, this endless source of fascination, together with his eye and his travels, was the subject that absorbed the greater part of their conversation. Their questions about him soon ended, and no mention was made of his run-down appearance. They were more interested in providing information than in receiving it, and Tim finally had to come to his nephew's rescue and lead him back to the car. He had not been able to find his magazine, which was supposed to contain a popular digest of some research he had done abroad. "Oh, well, I'll send for it," he said.

It was not until he reached the little pink house on Union Street that he showed any of the sentiment that he

had plainly been feeling ever since his arrival while he talked of other things. But even then, his expression was guarded. "Tim! It looks the same as ever. Hasn't even been painted. You're wonderful! There aren't many people who have this sort of place to come back to and can feel at home in it all over again, in five minutes. I was telling somebody in Paris that—gosh, it was only yesterday!"

He said more of the same sort of thing when he got indoors, carrying both pieces of luggage, which Tim had not been able to wrest from him. He had also said it in 1845, but Tim remarked, "You know, I really think you're back this time to stay," and checked the 'sir' that he was about to add.

"Of course I am," said David. "Now, where's the telephone? I'd better call home at once, and pretend I'm in New York, so they won't be hurt. I want to spend tonight here. I—I'm not quite ready for East Hampton." It was his first admission, aside from his long-distance call, that his homecoming might prove to be as difficult as it had been the last time.

And as he said it he swallowed and breathed deeply and looked like a soldier again, as he had in 1842, a soldier getting ready for battle. Tim didn't have to show him where the phone was. David remembered that it stood next to where his mother's bed had been, the only modern ~~invasion~~ upon a perfect colonial interior that might have been transferred intact to a museum. He had had it installed for her when he got his first summer-time job.

## VI

## THE EMPTY EYE

THE sun had not yet set, though it was out of sight when the black 1850 Ford passed the Indian Whooping Boys' Hollow, marked by a yellow and blue state historical signpost, passed the tiny fenced-in Jewish cemetery, and entered Sag Harbor. Pete drove eagerly but dared not allow himself to believe that his father was actually so near. He had known that he wanted to see him, that he had been looking forward to their meeting for years, but he had not expected to be caught up by such a blind passion as now sent him headlong on a no doubt foolish errand. He had not known that he expected so much of his father. He had been in fact rather ashamed of his feelings about his father ever since his election to a good club at Harvard had been made easier by his father's renown. He had feared secretly that his love of his father was purely selfish. But now he saw himself already fetching shield and helmet, while his mighty senior, the rags falling off his stalwart arms, shot down the scurrilous suitors with a swift and unerring bow.

But as his car turned screeching into Union Street, some of Pete's eagerness left him. He always felt emotional complications whenever he approached the actual site of his grandmother's disgrace, and now, seeing it for the first time since his graduation from a distinguished institution where the last bone of a family skeleton had apparently been buried, he was hit hard by snobbish shame. He longed for the robust earthiness of his father, which had never permitted him to suffer from such embarrassments. He wished that he too could be single-heartedly grateful for the gift of life, in spite of the various social blemishes that accompanied it.

Every room of the little pink cottage had its windows open. Every room was lighted. But the blinds were drawn in the front room, and swished in the gentle breeze that blew in. Sensibility warned Pete, therefore, to go not to the front door but to the side.

Tim came almost before he had knocked. The old man had a dishcloth in his hands, and was drying the silver that had been used at dinner. There were two knives, two forks. He wore a plastic apron, and had taken off his heavy jacket and waistcoat.

"Petel! This is a surprise. What brings you here?" he asked, but he did not undo the hook that would have opened the screen door. He looked as cannily watchful as he did when he fished.

"I got a call from Father tonight, and I just wondered if—is he here, Tim?"

"Who?"

"Father."

"*Your* father?"

"Yes."

"Here?"

"Yes."

"What gave you that idea?"

"Well, you see, I thought he might be here because of the way the call came. They didn't say—"

Tim undid the hook. "Come on in. He's in the front room. But don't go in there just yet. The housekeeper at the parish house is in there with him. She saw him from her window, though why she couldn't tell it all to the priest I don't know— Have you had your dinner?"

"Oh, don't worry about me."

"Sit down. He didn't call you more than— What about a drink? We were drinking Jameson's—in the special bottle. Here, he bought it"

Pete was eating some pie and waiting for his coffee to cool when Tim told him of the injury to his father's eye.

The boy was grateful later for the forewarning. When his father had said good-night to the housekeeper from the parish house, and emerged from the front room, Pete greeted him but said nothing about the black patch over his sightless eye. His father kissed him on the forehead as if he were still a boy.

"You've grown! Why, you must be taller than I am! Tim, measure us." They stood back to back, while Tim ran his hand over their hair to pat it down. "Isn't he a beauty, Tim? The pictures were terrible."

"Pete's got half an inch on you," Tim reported.

Pete explained how he had deduced his father's presence in Sag Harbor from the phone call, and his father said, "You'll stay the night, won't you? There's room for him, isn't there, Tim? That's a double bed in my room. He could sleep with me."

And so it was arranged. They chatted for a while about old friends, about the new ferryboat which ran between Sag Harbor and New London, about everything except what was really on their minds. Meanwhile they drank highballs from thick glasses that had once contained jelly. But David was not one to let this kind of desultory talk go on long. He rose and looked out of the window.

"It's getting dark. Will you hold the fort, Tim? Pete and I want to take a walk and see how the harbour looks."

"Run along," said Tim. "I'll hold the fort." His tone suggested that he would much rather have had them stay with him, or been asked along, but he gave in quickly.

"We'll be back soon," David promised.

"Run along, I know how it is." This time the old man managed to conceal his disappointment perfectly.

Pete accepted his sacrifice eagerly. He wanted to be alone with his father, especially now. The sight of his father had reassured him. He felt that he had on his side the most powerful character, the most unshakable will that



he had ever encountered. In less than an hour he had passed from a situation where he felt weak, where his deepest beliefs were suspect, to another where he had an ally who would sustain him. His relief was so great that he wished now to question his father, to make sure that he really was as strong as he seemed, that he really could stand up against their enemies. And when the time was right he would bring up the subject of the black patch.

"Your letters were interesting," David said. "Do you still want to go into the State Department?"

"I've just been in Washington. I looked at a graduate school that prepares you for it. I'm going to try to get a scholarship, but maybe if I can raise enough money by fall I'll—"

"Let's say you can raise the money. That's what you want to do?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"What about languages? You have French and Italian, but what about—?"

"Fair German, Spanish not bad."

"No Russian?"

"I might take that at the school."

"You don't sound as keen on the school as you were in your letters?"

"Oh, it's all right. But maybe I don't want to do anything now. If I only knew whether they're going to draft me. A couple of fellows here—you remember the Porters? Well, Bob Porter and Ted Agate are just living in East Hampton and making a living off-shore fishing. They don't know whether they'll be drafted or not."

"Off-shore fishing?"

"Yes, they go around in yachting caps and wear oilskins when they—"

"But what does it lead to?"

"Listen, too many things have been happening to me!

I want to just loaf. I've been taking in a lot of stuff. I want to digest it."

They stopped and looked at the harbour. Lights shone across dark water from Shelter Island and Cedar Point. Curved bows that had nudged whale calves off Malaya seemed about to appear from out of the black. But now that the port was inactive it was well illuminated.

"I can understand that," said David. "Maybe that's what I've been doing this past year or so, ever since this injury to my eye."

"Tim told me about it," Pete remarked softly.

"Yes? Then I don't have to. But loafing—it is necessary. But so is getting ready, and you could give a little more attention to that, perhaps."

"Yes?"

"Oh, don't worry I'm not going to give you advice. I don't know you well enough now. If I *were* giving you advice, I'd try to keep you out here on Long Island."

"Why?"

"Because this is where I'm going to be. That is, if my health is O.K. I'm going to the hospital for a check-up on Tuesday."

"Here? Aren't you going back to the Laboratory in New Y——?"

"No, I'm going to move part of it out here. *If* my health is O.K." For an instant Pete was reminded of his father's run-down appearance, and wondered if he had inherited his tendency to spend his energy too freely.

"Do you think you can get the money?"

"I'm sure I can."

"You were going to do that when you came back from the War."

"This time there'll be no money problem. I've been working on it while I was away."

Pete remembered that in '45, though he was only sixteen then, he had been enthusiastic about his father's project,

perhaps because he would have been enthusiastic about anything his father proposed to do. He had not really understood what it meant, but it had excited him. It had excited him still more when he was nineteen and accidentally, at a party in Cambridge, made the acquaintance of a member of the faculty who had worked with his father. "So you're the son of David Holderness?" the man had said. "He spoke of you. Yes, you look like him." And later the man had said, while they were drinking whisky sours, "Too bad his decentralisation idea fell through. I think he really had something there." That night when he went back to his room Pete had taken down a copy of his father's book, *The Rusty Demon*, and found within it a forgotten clipping from the *New York Herald-Tribune* of an interview with his father, which was printed in the Sunday book review section late in 1845. The interview described him in his hospital room, where he was recovering from his accident, and continued:

Just feeling around a bit, this writer asked Dr. Holderness if he were preparing a new volume for the non-technical reader. His books on medicine had been a little too difficult for the layman, but his lone volume addressed to the general reader had been read by at least one of them with interest and a great deal more than interest. In extraordinarily simple language, though without 'writing down' or popularisation, it had described the stern self-knowledge that 'men of good will' and 'liberals' must attain if they are to survive the inevitable onslaughts of a new barbarism which threatens the entire world.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I was at work on another book when this accident occurred."

Would he be willing to disclose any of its contents? Had the accident hampered its continuance?

"No," he said slowly, "the accident has made me more

eager than ever to write the book. It will probably mean that I'll have to put off a certain scientific project that I have in mind, but it won't stop the book."

What was the book about?

"The book is about the changing rôle of the scientist in our society. For some time I have believed that sooner or later the scientist must face the fact that he will be an honoured guest in our society only so long as he behaves himself. There has already been ample evidence in certain foreign countries of his politicalisation, but it doesn't take much foresight to see that the same thing not only can happen here but is already on the way.

"If he provides us with new cures or new inventions or new weapons or new facts, he will be made to feel welcome. But once he begins to correlate his discoveries, once he begins to force us to see ourselves more clearly as a result of them, I am afraid he will begin to be very unpopular.

"For example, if he were to intimate, ever so slightly, that the common man is not able to cope with our new knowledge, and that it is dangerous demagoguery to say that he can, general hatred of the scientist as a type would be inevitable.

"So long as education is thought to be easy, we will believe in it. It is in fact Article One of the democratic credo. Now, however, every day makes it clear ~~that~~ that education requires new disciplines that few of us are willing to adopt—and that, if we *did* adopt them, might destroy all spontaneity in the average person, all joy. We had no idea that it entailed so many psychological, so many moral responsibilities. We thought it was simply a matter of going to classes, reading books, taking degrees.

"The true scientist, the true educator will be our next pariah. The true artist has already become one. Popular support will inevitably be withdrawn from anyone who

threatens popular illusions. When it is clear that he is no longer harmless, the scientist will be recognised as a troublesome new kind of moralist. We will find marvellously interesting ways of starving him or—if he is too insistent—of getting rid of him. Even when he shows a way to truer happiness, he will have to be destroyed.”

The interview had ended with a jocular attempt to get Dr. Holderness to say something more encouraging, and some final words of cheer had been put into his mouth which he angrily disavowed when he read them later in his hospital cot. To Pete the most interesting part of the interview had been “. . . marvellously interesting ways . . . of getting rid of h.m.,” which he interpreted as a clear reference to his mother and her attempt to destroy his father on the missing cellar stairs. It was the first time that Pete had been made so vividly aware of what he thought of as her ‘dark side’, because his memory had blotted out the newspaper stories about her and the labour leader. The summer after his father went away Pete again became aware of her ‘dark side’ when he found some nude photographs of her under some albums of newspaper clippings in a drawer where he had been searching for some scotch tape. He recalled that recently she had been dining with a photographer for a fashion magazine, and tore up the pictures, after hardly daring to look at them, and then burnt them. If she missed them later, she never said anything about them. And he, of course, could not mention them either to her then or to his father now, although the complex memory that led him back to them, via his father’s departure, the party at Cambridge, and the interview in the New York paper, caused him to interrupt his father’s train of thought, as they walked along the bay-side path of the little park in Sag Harbor and looked out at the dark waters.

His father had said that he had been working on his

project while he was away. And he went on, "This time, if I'm O.K., I won't allow anything to interfere with it."

But Pete, tormented by his memories, could not help saying, "Not even Mother?"

His father stopped walking and turned towards him. Pete stopped shortly ahead of him. "You're not to think that, Pete," he said pleadingly, as if continuing an old debate that gave him pain. "She had nothing to do with it."

"Well, all I know is that you were for it, and then you broke your leg, and you were not for it any more. You went away."

"I thought your letters were very unfair to her."

"You won't," Pete answered confidently, "when you see her."

"Oh, come! Let's not ruin tonight with all *that*! But I do wish I hadn't arrived on a week-end. I'd like to see her alone."

"Maybe it's better this way. Surrounded by her *friends*. Better face all of it."

"My poor lad," his father said, slipping an arm about his shoulders and giving him a hug. "You've had a hard time of it. Of course I'm to blame about the money."

"Why didn't you send it to me direct?"

"I had no idea she wouldn't—I just couldn't imagine such a thing. But look, she has her faults, but so have you, and so have I. I really need her, Pete. I always do my best work when she's around."

"I know. You say that. You've said it before. But every time you two get together it seems to me that she does something terrible to you."

"Not this time. I really think it will work out all right this time."

"And I think she's worse than ever before."

"She stimulates me. I get my best ideas when she's around. For some time now I've felt the need of her. I'm

over-theoretical, over-intuitive. She pulls me down to earth. The way I was when I insisted on calling you Solomon. She corrects that. And she does a lot more. She really makes me think."

"I can imagine! Should I open this door or not? Is it going to be safe, or am I going to fall down and break my leg? A woman like that keeps a man on his toes!"

David laughed. "Oh, it isn't as bad as that!"

"Isn't it?"

David stopped laughing. "It will be all right this time," he said with a smile that pleaded with his son to be more lenient. "Come on, let's go back to Tim's."

Pete shrugged his shoulders and walked in the direction suggested by his father. There was so much that he wanted to tell his father about his mother, and so much that he couldn't. He contented himself with trying to get another laugh. "Wait until you meet Mr. Gillham!"

"Who's he?"

"One of her *friends*." And he told the story of the zoot suit, and told it well, with such verve that his father looked at him with an admiration that he usually won only on the baseball diamond. His father laughed. He laughed several times.

When they got back to the house on Union Street it was still lighted up in every room and Tim was obviously looking forward to the talk of which he had been cheated. David, although he seemed very tired—he had not slept the night before on the plane—did not disappoint him. He got out from a suitcase some photographs of India and China and Syria and Egypt and told one or two stories and also answered a few questions briefly about his work. His presents would arrive, he said, when his trunk arrived. But it was not long before he had contrived to be silent most of the time and was getting Tim to tell him about Old Man Cochran, who was crippled but hobbled about in his piano store and played an old upright eight hours a day—

music that sounded like birds and waterfalls and children playing. And the town drunk had just been given three months in jail to get him off the streets when the tourists arrived. And the real estate agent still called everybody, especially his clients, 'lovely people' And a dog could still sleep at high noon in the middle of Main Street.

"It's not the same old town, really, though," said David. "Thirty years ago, back when I was a kid, we still took these small-town characters seriously. Now we laugh at them. I could see it in their faces this evening. They've lost their self-respect."

"They get duller every day," said Tim. "I should have gone to Ireland. If I hadn't been married, I would have."

"If the Lab does its work well, maybe we can put self-respect back into the faces of at least some of the small-town people," said David, and then as if sensing that Tim did not follow him, he asked, "Are there any new chain stores?"

"Big new one going up in the fall," said Tim.

"Does the paper still call itself A REPUBLICAN NNEWS-PAPER? With two Ns?"

"They haven't caught it yet."

"What about the slums?"

"Worse and worse."

"Any people on relief?"

"More and more of them."

"How about real estate prices?"

"Going up."

"Any new artists?"

"More and more of them."

"Any more museums?"

"No."

"Is your insurance paid up?"

"Yes," said Tim. "I'll have a good funeral."

They sat up until after midnight, drinking Irish and soda out of jelly glasses and eating toasted turkey sand-



wiches with Russian dressing that Tim made better than any restaurant could make them. "Your father used to like my sandwiches too," he told David.

"I know, I know. So I look like him now?"

"Yes, but you're not the man you used to be."

"This German," said Pete, "was he crazy?"

"No, I just handled him wrong."

Pete started to say that he had handled another person wrong too, but, after a glance at his extremely tired face, checked himself and said nothing. He hadn't the heart to ask any more of one who gave himself so generously. His father looked grateful, and Tim disappointed, when he suggested that they go to bed.

In the bedroom he caught a glimpse of his father's injured eye, when the black patch was taken off. There was no sign of the injury, and the lid worked up and down, but the pupil looked empty.

## VII

### A YOUTH LEADER IN MIDDLE AGE

WHILE he was throwing darts, before dinner was announced, Greco realised that he had got himself into a bad situation. Carlotta's husband was coming back. He had to make a decision and soon. Should he stay, or should he get out?

His sense of public relations told him to get out. To be hanging around when a woman's husband came back after four and a half years—that was no spot to be in. But he had interrupted his work and made a long trip for a specific purpose—and if he left now, his sacrifice would be pointless. Also, there was another reason for staying on. Not as important as the other but still important.

He had to come up with the right answer, and soon, and announce it to her flatly. He must never let any woman make up his mind for him. Especially the one woman who had made a fool of him, and for such a long time.

He began losing money to her. The darts flew like wilful, unruly birds. Usually when he went to a carnival he astonished everybody by his knack at throwing a cheap sawdust baseball right where it had to be thrown to knock three stuffed kittens off a table at one blow, and he had kewpie dolls and lampshades covered with cellophane to give away, and further tributes to his uncanny precision to disclaim, but now the darts possessed a life of their own. Sometimes he threw so wildly that he did not hit the board. Even the Wall Street man was better. And the woman made them both look bad. The large-eyed girl from Bennington remarked that it was the first time she had ever seen a woman throw better than a man.

His nerves had also been bad in Hollywood. It was the first time in his life that he had been seriously worried about himself, about his future, his work, everything. He had not known doubt for a long time. But now it came when he least expected it. His famous patience and good-humour were gone. He became unreasonable, and in a place and in an industry where unreasonableness was too expensive to be tolerated. He made mistakes that he had never made when he was a mere beginner. His boss in Hollywood decided at last that he was still worried about the Un-American Affairs Committee, even though they had given him a clean bill of health and did not seem to have him scheduled for any further appearances. His interviews with the F.B.I. had likewise seemed highly successful, but his boss believed he was still worried, especially about Dickson, and so he had sent Greco off on his trip to meet Dickson. But Greco was not sure that his troubles originated in any fear of any Congressman. When his boss challenged him he could not name any secret problem, and

yet he believed that they were overlooking one, and that it was right under their nose. What was it? He didn't know. It might be very simple. He didn't know.

Some self-destructive demon had brought him back within Carlotta's range. As usual, she made him feel ridiculous and powerless. His energy, his turbulence, which when directed towards other women brought speedy victory and speedy detachment, had never affected her. She had a way of eluding him, gently and in the kindest way possible. And who *was* she? Fairly successful, but, compared with him, nobody. Even the wisecracks for which she had such a reputation—sometimes they were good, sometimes they stank.

He was a fool to come to East Hampton.

He had been a fool the first time he met her. It was back in the '30s. Everything had been in his favour, and yet he had let her get the upper hand. It was the first time he had ever given two thoughts to any woman except his wife. He had been too busy. About every eighteen months his wife had another baby, and aside from her and his home he kept his mind fiercely on the theatre. If there was any extra energy it went into reading Marxist literature. But most of his time was given, successively, to carpentering, to stage-managing, to acting, to directing for the left-wing People's Theatre in which he slowly gained a dominant position, while it became one of the best-known theatres on Broadway.

Later he had many women, but when he met Carlotta he had never been with any woman but his wife, and was horrified to find his thoughts straying from her. Along with his devotion to his work, he counted on his innocence to help him excel other men, and for the first time he had secret doubts of it and of himself. He had always admitted that he had 'a lot to learn', that he must study the best authors, haunt museums and concert halls, and above all work hard at his craft, if he were ever to realise his

ambitions, but since these were a matter of will, and he had never had reason to question his will, his future seemed assured. Now his will wobbled.

The People's Theatre had reached one of the several spells of financial and moral depression it was to experience before it finally folded. The year before it had a prosperous hit, and its actors ate regularly. Two unsuccessful productions, however, had changed all that, and Greco found himself without work and without money. Through certain political connections he was able to get a job readily with the Federal Theatre, where his emerging talent as a director was already highly respected. He was casting a play called *The Spaghetti Joint*, the chief character of which was a middle-aged Italian woman who owned a restaurant. None of the actresses offered him was satisfactory. They were all either stogy or amateurish. With the thoroughness that later became legendary he sought the right woman in every theatre group or theatre school that he had heard of. He was given permission to recruit any actress who was not on relief, if she were willing to take the small salary paid by the government to members of its national theatre. He tried out dozens of women, but when Carlotta was sent him—by a Russian woman who ran an acting school according to the methods developed in the Moscow Art Theatre—he was so sure that she could not play the part that he told her there must have been a mistake.

"This woman is fifty years old," he said with a friendly smile. It was a raw winter afternoon, getting on towards five o'clock, and he was surrounded by several actors and technicians who wanted to sign out and go home. The place was the cellar of a public school, and the heat had been turned off. The aluminium-painted radiators were cold. He was wearing an overcoat, with the collar turned up, and he kept his hat on. "You're too young."

"I can use make-up," she said. "They told me you didn't

believe in type-casting." She wore a mink coat, and the actors glared at her. Word had spread that she had come to the school in a car driven by a chauffeur.

"I don't." He smiled again, in the comfortable knowledge that he had been freed from the prejudices of the commercial theatre.

"Why don't you let me read for you? I've looked at the part. I can do it." She was so reasonable, so well poised that he began to get annoyed with her.

"What experience have you had?"

"Well, at the School I've done——"

"I don't mean the School. I mean real acting experience."

"Well, I've done summer theatre."

"Where?"

"East Hampton."

"Where's that?"

"Long Island."

"Never heard of it."

"I thought you belonged to the People's Theatre."

"I do."

"I thought the People's Theatre was opposed to the way managers push actors around."

"Well, we do."

"Why are you acting like a manager, then? Why don't you give me a chance?"

He smiled suddenly. "I'm sorry. Sure, go ahead and read." And to his surprise he found himself getting up and showing her and a male actor the scene he wanted them to read. She took off her coat. She was wearing a very *chic* black suit made in Paris.

It was the last time he was doubtful of her talent. Instead of being pale and elegant in her performance, as he had expected, she tended to over-act; she played the scene—in which a mother denounces her son for having become a gangster and participated in a hold-up—with an unin-

hibited, operatic vehemence such as the modern realistic theatre no longer permitted. She had passion and theatricality of a kind that a director could mould. When the scene was over he ran up to her and put his arms around her and cried, "Where does it come from? My God! My God! I kept thinking of my own mother."

"Was it all right?" she asked, as calmly as before. She moved out of his arms gently. Once again she was a well-bred lady who looked as if she were slumming.

"Well, you'll have to tone it down, but——"

"You mean, you want me for the part?" she asked quickly.

He was used to actors who were not quite so level-headed. "Well," he paused, "yes. Of course. Sure, you can do it." And found himself on the defensive with her, for fear she would think him crude and impulsive, because he had flung his arms around her. "Won't you sit down?" he asked her politely.

"I think I'd better put on my coat first." And she looked at him as if she expected him to help her with it. He did.

"Where did you learn to speak Italian so well?" asked the other actor, whose name was Nobiletti.

"In Italy."

"You were terrific," said the actor. "It was really exciting to play with you." He asked her to have a cup of coffee and a sandwich with him at a near-by cafeteria, and Greco said he would come along, but she let them walk her to her car, where she thanked them, said "*A la maison*" to the chauffeur, and drove off.

When rehearsals began Greco set himself the task of educating her in the principles of stagecraft that he had been learning in the People's Theatre. He knew that she came from a well-to-do background, and he also knew the erroneous impressions that such people have about the theatre, and so he began to drop hints about the new kind of theatre that was going to replace the old one.

"You live on Beekman Place," he said. "You probably think that Katharine Cornell is a good actress. As a matter of fact——"

"As a matter of fact, I think I'm much better," she said.

Looking back on his lessons years later, he realised that they had almost invariably taken this turn: he had started out to lecture her, and she had neatly made a fool of him. And yet there was a lot she didn't know, and a lot that she did learn from him. And sometimes her behaviour was downright childish. How much of the little girl there was in her! And she thanked him repeatedly for helping her. But always she made him feel off balance when he tried to talk to her after rehearsals were over. And even when he seriously altered her politics, and had the satisfaction of seeing her march in a May Day parade down Park Avenue to Union Square, with her fist clenched in the Communist salute, while her ex-father-in-law, the Judge, looked down at her in horror from a window in the Union League Club, she made Greco feel that he was her pupil rather than her teacher. But *her* lessons were not taught pedantically—with a mere look of the eye when he did something crude or said something coarse, or with a pained Gallic expression about the mouth when he talked dogmatically of the future as the Marxists knew it was going to be.

The opening night of *The Spaghetti Joint* was a big success for both of them. She as the star and he as the director got much better notices than the author. The critics found good things to say about the Federal Theatre, which if it did this kind of work might some day justify its existence. "No boondoggling here," wrote one newspaperman.

There was a party after the opening, and Greco told his wife she'd better go home, it wouldn't be much fun, and they'd better save money on the baby-sitter. He asked Carlotta, who had been evasive about the party, if she was

going, but she said no, ever so gently, and let him walk her to her taxi from the stage door, which must have been all of sixty feet. She always took a taxi now. Since the first afternoon there had been no further evidence of the car or the chauffeur, and it turned out later that she had hired them for an effect that she certainly obtained. Her vigorous reading had been all the more astonishing after her elegant entrance. Standing by the taxi was her husband, a tall, slender, good-looking man with very keen eyes, who shook his hand warmly when they were introduced and thanked him for "helping my wife so much." Greco did not go to the party, but walked home alone, lecturing himself sternly. "I'm a fool, I'm a fool!" he said over and over again. He was especially sweet to his wife that night.

A few days later he was invited to tea at Carlotta's, but he did not go. The People's Theatre had found a fairly likely script and some tentative backing for it, as well as a place to reassemble in during the summer, and there were many meetings that he had to attend. Compared with this, Carlotta meant little in his life, and he saw her rarely. But one Saturday evening between the matinée and the evening performances he went back-stage after attending the matinée to find out how it was going, and after he had talked with her about her part, suggesting one or two small changes, for which she was as usual grateful, she asked him if he were free for dinner and he found himself, to his own surprise, saying yes. He made a call in a phone booth to his wife to tell her he was busy. Carlotta took him to a very good French restaurant, and insisted that it was her treat. Later he went back to this restaurant many times, and took his friends, but this was his first meal there, and she paid for it.

"My husband thinks you're a very remarkable young man," she told him when they had been seated by a head waiter who addressed her as Mrs. Holderness in a way that suggested that she had eaten there often before and that



her position in the social world entitled her to extra respect.

"You introduced him as a doctor. What is he, a specialist?"

"No, he works in a laboratory."

"Oh, research!"

"Yes. He has seen you act with the People's Theatre, and he's very much interested in everything that the People's Theatre is doing. We both are. We've gone to every play you've done, when we've been in this country."

'Now I get it!' Greco thought. 'She wants to become a member.' Actresses were continually trying to join the People's Theatre. He asked her, rather warily, her husband's opinion of it.

"Oh, he sees everything from a scientist's point of view. He's been very much interested psychologically in youth movements. We saw the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany and next time we are going to see the Bolsheviks in Russia. Whenever there's a social upheaval, he says, there's a youth movement. The New Deal here is a youth movement too, but of a very moderate kind because we're so prosperous."

"Prosperous! Has he seen the headlines, the Hoover-villes, the——"

"Yes, but those things are nothing compared with what's happened abroad. Have you been abroad?"

"No, but——"

"Well, I don't want to bore you with his opinions. But he thinks you're a very remarkable young man, and one of our youth leaders."

"That's a lot of hokey! In the first place, I'm not at all in sympathy with the New Deal, it doesn't go nearly far enough, and ——" Greco protested, but she soon stopped him and changed the subject, meanwhile making him feel that he had been very crude. When the People's Theatre was mentioned she said it was good for an entirely different

type of person from herself. The phrase 'youth leader', however, stuck in his mind and he returned to it years later, in '43, in conversation with her, when they were working together again on a play. It was during the War then, and both of them were much better known. He especially because he had directed one or two films.

Also, he felt much more confident then. He was no longer a kid, he was thirty-five years old, and he had lost some of his ideals after the *Peuple's Theatre* had come to an end and he had gone to Hollywood. He had learned too much as a director from his extra-marital affairs to be able to believe any longer in the strength to be obtained from sexual innocence. And most important of all, he had lost his illusions about her. She was no longer the remote, easily offended society woman who happened to have a gift for acting. She was an actress known for her competence, her realism, her liveliness, her wit, as well as a certain hardness. She was not cast in sympathetic parts. Before her husband had gone away to war, she was rumoured to have separated from him. She was also said to have had affairs with a labour leader, a high French official who had been sent by his government to the United States, two or three actors, and a night-club owner who was little better than a gangster.

Greco was not going to let her take a high and mighty tone with him this time. First of all, *he* would do the treating. He would no longer permit himself to be shoved into the corner as a 'remarkable young man', as a 'youth leader' or any other kind of curiosity. She was an attractive woman—not quite as beautiful as she had been, perhaps, but better able to use her face and her body on the stage—and she had always had something that he wanted. It would help him as a director to enrich himself with her. She was Mediterranean, and so was he. He needed something that she had.

He asked her more than once to dinner, and she

accepted his invitations. He asked her to go out after the theatre, and she accepted his invitations. He went home to her apartment with her. He tried to kiss her. She wouldn't let him. It was the old story all over again. In the kindest way possible she turned him down.

"What's wrong with me?" he asked.

"Nothing at all. I think you're wonderful! One of the nicest people I know."

"But why can't we——?"

"I don't know. You're too young."

"I'm only one year younger than you."

"You're too young."

"Nuts, don't give me any more of that 'youth leader' stuff. I never did swallow that anyway."

But it was no dice, and they didn't see much more of each other during the run of the play, which was about French Canadians. She played a spiteful crippled woman in it. She had wanted another part, more sympathetic though less important, but he wouldn't let her have it.

In '45 she had acted for him again—in a play about truck-drivers and their women that he expected to be very successful. But it flopped, and he was too busy during rehearsals to see much of her, except in a professional way. She was expecting her husband back from the War soon. Greco was not in New York when her husband returned, and there was a scandal about an accident. Greco never knew what it was all about, although he heard some rumours and had noticed that Carlotta was nervous about the return of her husband, talking about it every day, as if it meant very much to her.

Greco had felt glad then that he had been too busy for her. At last he had got her out of his system. She was just one more woman, and whether he had her or not really made very little difference. It was his work that counted, and women had much less to do with an artist's work than was commonly supposed. You needed one to sleep with

now and then, but aside from that, they were vastly over rated. The main thing was the work, finding a way to take a script and discover things in it that nobody else had known were there. Make the audience feel it. And do it so they didn't know how it was being done. Sock them before they knew what was happening to them. "Hit 'em where they live!"

His escape from her in made it all the worse that now in he was back within her range, and he had foolishly gone to the beach and sat in the sun—he never went swimming because he was no good at it—and fired his loins. He had just worked up a real yen for her, and the night before she had made him feel that at last she was looking at him as if he were a man she could get interested in, when tonight her husband had to call up out of the blue and say that he had come back from Europe. It was the kind of luck that he might have expected from anything that had to do with her. It was snow in July, but whenever he was with her that was what happened.

Finally, when he had lost ninety dollars to her, dinner was announced. She made him sit again, as she had done the night before, on her right hand. The food looked very good. It was lamb and eggplant, cooked in a Greek style in his honour, and her French cook knew how to make pilaff. There was also some resinous Greek wine which he had to drink, though he did not like it. • •

"We won't wait any more for Peter," Carlotta said. "Let's not spoil our dinner. He'll show up."

And then Greco knew that he was going to stay. He wanted to meet the Congressman, and he also felt encouraged about Carlotta. There was something in the way she looked at him which made him feel better. In it had turned out that she was not nearly as eager for the return of her husband as she had seemed to be. She had been involved later in an accident in which he was seriously injured. Also, there had been a lot of trouble

between them at other times. They were not the devoted couple he had thought they were.

'But it will be better,' Greco thought, 'to use a little strategy. She will find out that I'm not a kid any longer.' And his course of action grew clearer in the course of the meal, which was not as good as his mother had cooked when she was alive but still not bad at all.

After dinner, while they sipped small cups of Turkish coffee in a coral-coloured living-room, he said to Carlotta in a voice that could not be overheard, "I'm going to have to get out of here tonight."

"No!" She seemed dismayed.

"Yes," he said firmly.

"Why?" She was obviously anxious to keep him there.

"Let's slip outside," he suggested.

"Not just now. In half an hour. I'll meet you at the back of the house."

From then on he knew exactly what to do. If he had been throwing darts, they would no longer have flown out of his hands like birds. His nerves were getting better.

## VIII

### THE HARDEST THING OF ALL

GRECO excused himself and did not reappear in the coral-coloured living-room where the others drank coffee, and Cyrilla noticed this, because she had some questions she wished to ask him. Meanwhile her mother remarked spitefully, "So this is what Spartas has turned out to be. At Amherst he used to wait on tables! I like his movies, but personally I can't stand him." In her pink dress she looked

as soft and lovable as an old-fashioned, lace-fringed valentine, her daughter thought, but only if one didn't examine her face too closely. Her face had the sharp lines of an osprey, and Cyrilla turned away from it with the same pain that she felt most of the time now when her mother spoke.

"Funny, I don't like his movies," she said mildly, "but I do like him."

"I can't *stand* him," Nancy repeated.

"Why don't you like his movies?" Cyril asked his daughter encouragingly.

"Well, compared with most other movies, they're very good. But——"

Her mother interrupted, "Where's Carlotta? Did anybody see Carlotta?"

"Went upstairs for a moment," said Gillham, who was the only person present who did not belong to the Whitlock family. "I don't like him, either. But he's smart. I can see that." Gillham was wearing a brass-buttoned dark blue plaid jacket, with dark grey slacks. During dinner he had stared at Cyrilla, who had not changed her stained sweat-shirt or her khaki shorts. When her mother had remonstrated with her, he had seemed to agree. Cyrilla had smiled pleasantly at both of them, but made no move to go upstairs and change. She saw no reason to, after Pete disappeared.

"—they're effective, but they're so overdone," she went on, answering her father's question. "He seems to be going in the same direction as Hitchcock—pure sensat——"

"Are you sure she went upstairs?" her mother interrupted again.

"Yes, I saw her," said Gillham.

"Go on," said Cyril to his daughter.

"Did you ever see *Code of Honour*?" she asked.

"No."

"Well, it's about anti-Semitism. It won a prize."

"Oh yes, I remember now."

"Well, that's typical. It was very effective. Too effective. It showed up the nastiness of anti-Semitism, but in such an overdone way that it injured a good cause."

"What's nasty about anti-Semitism?" asked Gillham. "I'm anti-Semitic."

Cyrilla's eyes opened wide. Her curiosity was still greater than her horror. "Oh no, you're not! Nobody who has any decent feelings is anti-Semitic." But even while she spoke, her reassurances rang untrue to her. Of course there were such people in the world, and one of them stood before her!

"I am. I don't know about my feelings, but I am."

"But——" She looked at him again. It was like being in the room with a genuine Nazi with a swastika on his arm. There was something fascinating about it.

"Go on," said her father. "What *was* wrong with the movie?"

"Oh, it hammered away so hard at—I don't know—there was something sick—why do you feel that way, Mr. Gillham?"

"For the same reason, I suppose, that Jews feel that way about Christians."

"Oh, but they don't!"

"Oh, but they do!"

"Really, what was the War fought about if it wasn't——"

"I'm going upstairs and look for Carlotta," announced her mother.

"I was once in a room full of Jews where nobody knew I was not a Jew. And ever since that, I've known what to expect from any Jew."

"What happened?" asked Cyril Whitlock. "Did they roast a Christian baby?"

"You can laugh, but they'll do worse than that to us if they ever get the chance."

"Really." Cyril had remarked earlier to his daughter

that he was glad Gillham was one rich man to whom he could be blunt. He had nothing to do with Princeton.

"Good-night, everybody," said Cyrilla, suddenly wearied by this kind of argument. The intellectual shock of Mr. Gillham's frankness had worn off, and been replaced with a depressing sense of his ignorance and malice. She wanted to be alone, to forget that such a man existed.

"Are you going?" asked her father. "It's Saturday night. You ought to be out having a good time. I wonder what happened to Peter?"

"Yes, I'm tired." She did not wish to discuss Pete, who had asked her to go dancing with him and then had disappeared without a trace.

"What's the book?"

"Oh, it's something by our hostess's husband, *The Rusty Demon*. I'm sure it's too technical for me, but something you said about him interested me. And now he's coming back, I thought——"

"Good-night, dear."

"Good-night, Daddy. Good-night, Mr. Gillham."

The gentlemen rose. Cyril kissed her on her forehead very tenderly. She went upstairs with the book, which had been lent to her by Pete, and fell down with it on her bed, on top of pink sheets and pink pillow and pink quilt, although they had already been turned down by a servant. In its table of contents she found a chapter title which attracted her and she opened the book, among the pages headed 'Women in Despair', and read the following:

It is often said that the United States is dominated by its women. We hear talk of matriarchal rule, 'momism', and so forth. And it is true that the economic demands of our culture mean that a great many men must remain, emotionally, children, if indeed they would have matured anywhere else. Large-scale industrialism is essential not only to our standard of living,



but to our military survival, and large-scale industrialism cannot permit the individual to attain his full personal stature. Factories, offices, stores require above everything else routine. In practice this means that a great many men become docile and submit to the moral domination of their women, who, as we have seen from numerous examples on previous pages, are better fitted constitutionally and psychologically to endure routine.

But women do not dominate the United States. The United States is dominated by  $x$ , and  $x$ , as we have seen, is distinctly hostile to women, is much closer to a cult of efficiency that is masculine and rationalistic in its orig—

The passage interested her, but she did not turn the page. She decided that she would start the book at its beginning, but first she read a clipping of an interview with the author which was in the book and had appeared in the book section of the Sunday *Herald-Tribune*. The clipping seemed to be about, not *The Rusty Demon*, but some later volume that he was planning to write. She found herself especially interested in the following ; assage in the interview:

The true scientist, the true educator will be our next pariah. The true artist has already become one. Popular support will inevitably be withdrawn from anyone who threatens popular illusions. When it is clear that he is no longer harmless, the scientist will be recognised as a troublesome new kind of moralist.

Then she began to read the book, beginning at page one. While she read she found her interest growing, and her mind returning to something that her father had said to her about Dr Holderness.

Her father had been discussing him the night before. They had arrived at East Hampton at about ten-thirty, because they had left New York at six o'clock and had

stopped off at a good French restaurant at Westbury for a sumptuous dinner. The fact that it was Friday worked no hardship on her father, because lobster was the *spécialité de la maison*, and he enjoyed himself with the wine list, which he said was excellent, taking out his tortoiseshell-glasses and studying it for a few minutes before he made up his mind. Meanwhile he chatted with the proprietor in French. He was still in a good mood when he arrived in East Hampton. There had been none of his usual digs at Cyrilla's mother, but his mood changed abruptly after he saw Dimitri Spartas. That was exactly the sort of thing that put him into a dither: meeting so unexpectedly a man who had been one of his students and then had gone 'out into the world' and made good. It was perfectly arranged to arouse old fears that he had failed, that he had been wrong 'to hide away from life', as he had often called it, in the English departments of Amherst and Dartmouth and Princeton. Cyrilla knew that he would be in for a miserable night and a miserable week-end if she did not take him out for a walk and subtly build him up again in his own self-esteem. She had to do what the girls at college called a 'snow job'—make him feel as good as if he had been taking cocaine. And since the stars were shining and the sea roaring gently not so far away, they walked down to have a look at it and reconcile themselves to a week-end that neither of them in the least looked forward to. He had consented to it, she knew, only as a favour to her mother, because in a few days he would be off to Rome for the ceremonies of Holy Year.

He was such a good man and so handsome. Any number of boys at Princeton imitated his mannerisms and his clothes. Both he and her mother were fashion-plates, and when the three of them had walked into the restaurant she felt as usual that the management looked at her a little dubiously, as if she were their servant, not their daughter. They had both given up long ago their gibes at her hard-

bitten nails and her yellow fingers and her uncombed hair. She had what her father called 'poetic licence'.

He was always so patient with her, so tolerant even of her drinking, that it was only right that she should spend a few minutes building him up. That morning he had received a long letter from Rome, from his godfather who was a papal councillor, and it had provided him with a text for reopening his attack on her new religious opinions. "There is nothing in Vedanta that you will not find already in the Church," he said. "And you were wrong. It is not true that Vedanta is not studied in Rome. As a matter of fact, there is a whole group of priests who have given the ancient Hindu texts some very close attention, and have also studied the Western branch that seems to have developed in California." And he had very kindly let the subject drop the minute she said, "Oh, Daddy, let's not go into all that again." Because she saw more and more clearly that the Church, which meant so much to him, would never mean much to her and quite possibly would never have entered her life if he had not been converted to it while she was a child.

When they came to the beach he was already feeling better. She had listened to him describe the life of Dimitri Spartas at Amherst, and slowly his account of it had become more sympathetic. "He always had a great deal of energy. Some day I must go to see one of his films. He had energy but almost no subtlety. He came from the New York slums, you know. I admired him, on the whole."

"He has a nice face. I can see how he wouldn't have appreciated your mind, though."

"He had a room-mate who felt very much ashamed of himself because he had had so many advantages and Spartas had had so few. The room-mate was the son of a banker in Columbus, Ohio, and was sure that he had had many advantages. He was the one who gave Spartas his nickname, Greco. And when Spartas learned that there was a

painter named that, and a very good one, he let himself be called by it. But the room-mate was much better looking, and was engaged to a beautiful girl named Maggie, and they were going to get married right after graduation day. But Greco met her, and after that neither his room-mate, nor the girl had a chance. Greco married her himself. When the room-mate heard of it he was very unhappy and wanted to fight Greco. But he thought better of it, and said, 'I'm a Trojan. Never trust a Greek.' That's about all I remember of them."

She laughed. "Do you think it will be warm enough to go swimming tomorrow?"

"I think so."

"Maybe we'll have a nice time after all. It's a beautiful house. I saw our hostess act in a horrible comedy called *His French Wife*, and I must say I didn't expect to see her living in such a delightful place."

"Why do you say that?" he asked in the encouraging tone that he used when he wanted to draw out his favourite pupil.

"Oh, she was bright and clever. And she had charm too. Of a kind. But there was something so—so heartless about her. Mummy took me back-stage after the performance and introduced me to her, and I must admit she's awfully amusing, but I couldn't think of a word to say to her. Actresses can become *too* artificial. Mummy was awfully annoyed with me. She likes her."

He made a gesture as if brushing away some gnats from his face. "I can remember when Carlotta was hardly artificial at all. You would have liked her then. And understood why she happens to live in her house."

"When was that, Daddy?" she asked eagerly.

"I've known Carlotta—oh, it must be seventeen or eighteen years. When Peter was just a child. I wonder what Peter's like now. He's coming tomorrow. Carlotta is a very remarkable woman. I think she's possessed."

"Really?"

"Yes, *really*. I pray for Carlotta. I pray for her every night. I think she's one of the most unfortunate women I ever met."

• "Daddy, this is terrific!"

"Carlotta had everything—brains, beauty, money, talent, and a superb education. Both secular and religious. Why, she's the niece of Jean Leverrier! And she married one of the finest men I've ever met. A man who's trying to do the hardest thing of all, who's trying to become a saint! And she married him young, when they had a chance to make something of their lives. And what is she doing now? She's acting in bedroom farces!" He could be carried away like this only when he had something important to say to her, only when his deepest beliefs were involved. Then he dropped the suave, ironic tone that he used as a shield in the classroom, and spoke heatedly and in short, broken sentences. Then he was a real teacher, and she knew again how lucky she had been to have the benefit of his guidance all along her difficult path, she knew again that she wouldn't have been able to write a line without him. Mozart's great music had been written as much by Mozart's father's great education as by Mozart himself, and she too had had the good fortune to be born to a man who couldn't practise an art himself but was a great teacher. The only trouble was that she couldn't be worthy of what he taught. She was sure to fail him.

But she was so glad she had taken him out for their walk. She had given him love at a moment when he needed it and she was getting it back now a hundredfold. "Daddy, this is terrific!" she repeated. "Go on!"

"People are so stupid when they don't believe in the Devil! What is modern psychiatry but a new kind of demonology? The psycho-analyst is just another exorcist. Carlotta is possessed, *really* possessed. Very well, say that she isn't possessed by the Devil but by the *Zeitgeist*! What

difference does that make? Her sufferings are the same, her failure is the same, she's still acting in bedroom farces, and she still makes a warm-hearted person like you recoil from her because she's *too* artificial! The spirit of the times has taken hold of her and transformed her into a first-class horror. I didn't want to shake her hand tonight, it felt loathsome to me. And there was a time when I was in love with her! I wanted to leave your mother, I would have been willing to give you up too, if I could only get her."

"Really, Daddy?" she asked with admiration, and thought, as she had thought so many times before, 'If he could only write like this! If he could only spit it out! Or if he could only talk like this to his classes.'

"I was as crazy about her then as your mother is now. Oh, I know what's going on, and so do you, but she'll never get her, she'll never get her. Carlotta's making a fool of her. Carlotta's even harder than she is. Carlotta's possessed, and David's one of the best psychologists we ever produced, and he hasn't been able to do a thing with her. When he came back after the War he thought he was ready for her at last. It's typical of him that he thinks he is able to do anything. But he wasn't. She sent him hobbling back to Europe. He was literally on crutches. I told him in Paris, 'You'll never get anywhere with her as long as you have nothing but a technique. What is your technique, anyway? Just a way to get her to adapt, to adapt herself to society. Why, she's adapted already, she's adapted better than you and I ever will. She's Miss America herself. That's what your secularism adds up to!'"

"Oh, I wish I hadn't stayed so long in London. Then I'd have met him!"

"You'll have to go to Paris to meet him now. He'll never come back. He's revenged himself perfectly on Carlotta. He's got Marthe Viardot. He's got the woman she *might have been*."

"Why do you think he's trying to be a saint?"

"It's so obvious. He'll come back to the Church. He was born a Catholic, you know. He'll get fed up with the superficiality of modern psychology. Wonderful technique but no goal, no way of life, no mystery. He's too subtle for that. And too passionate. Why, he was the one who told me that I should never leave Dartmouth. 'You're well out of it,' he said, 'on the fringe. Don't go to Princeton, don't get too close to New York. The people who live in New York are merely part of an experiment that isn't going to pan out. Why be a pawn in a historical stalemate? The only hope is decentralisation. I'm going to move my laboratory to the country, part of it at least. I'm going to live with people I've known from childhood. Science isn't enough—one has to think of the scientist also.' Well, it didn't work out for either of us. I'm in Princeton, and your mother has her office on Madison Avenue. He's in Paris, and Carlotta plays in bedroom farces. Our women won out." His voice had faded as he talked. He looked unhappy again, though pleased with the idea that Dr. Holderness had failed no less than he. After a while they walked back to the house, and she reproached herself for having let him lose the pedagogic ecstasy that he had reached for a few minutes. She wanted to ask him again why he thought Dr. Holderness was trying to be a saint—for such an ambition interested her more than any other—but she decided not to. He began to yawn, and she felt that he would be able to sleep now and should be permitted to.

But that was last night, when he had been sure that Dr. Holderness would never return to his home, and now it was Saturday night and Dr. Holderness had telephoned that he was back in America and would be coming home in the morning. And she was lying on top of her bed reading his book and trying to imagine what kind of man he was. She had failed to meet him both in this country and abroad. Her first impressions of his book were that it was

somewhat more abstract than she might have wished, but that its ideas were abundant and imaginative. If she were willing to work hard, it would almost surely reward her. Of course it would have been more fun to go dancing with the son, but after a while she didn't mind at all being stuck with the father.

## IX

### WEAVING AND UNWEAVING

WHILE Carlotta waited at the rear of her house she hoped that she would not be seen either by Ticky or the cook, Marie-José. Her conscience was clear about the meeting with Greco, but if she were observed slipping out with him she would certainly be under suspicion. And that would be unfortunate on the eve of David's return. Ticky had been with her a long time, and was of course completely loyal, but Carlotta had never permitted her to witness any scene in the least compromising.

Ticky might have had her suspicions on many occasions, but so far as her employer knew, she was entirely without proof of any kind. It had been a strain, especially during the war years and particularly on the occasion when a major in the Air Force—what was his name? Jack!—walked naked out of a bathroom in the apartment in the City. But even that had been explained satisfactorily to Ticky. And Marie-José, who was French and gossipy, had never been given any direct evidence of any kind.

Therefore Carlotta felt, since her intentions towards Greco were as innocent as they had always been, she must be particularly careful tonight. Ticky was devoted to David. The incident of the naked major had required only



a minor improvisation: he was a friend of David's passing through the City who wanted a bath and a meal in a real home. Ticky had not made the slightest difficulty; she wanted to have faith. But after the accident that befell David in '45, when he fell down into the cellar, Ticky had been on the point of acrimonious departure, until David himself spoke to her and persuaded her to stay. He left but she stayed. And now that he was coming back again, there must be no occasion to arouse the remarkably violent emotions that she attached to him.

Carlotta stayed hidden in a dark place near the barn. A bird rustled nervously in a bush, only a few feet from her head. It must be a particularly fat bluejay that she had noticed there yesterday, when she went to the garage to get her car. If David had been there, he would have given a friendly name to the bird and found time to watch him as he hopped about inside the bush, for he seemed too fat or too old to fly very much. Or perhaps he was just lazy.

If David had been there—he *would* be there, and tomorrow! She had not yet really appreciated it. He was coming home. He would be sitting down to lunch with them tomorrow at about 6.30 o'clock. And tomorrow night he would be in the same bed with her.

She felt uneasy. After the War she had expected so much of his return. And, except for a few happy hours together, he had done nothing but make her miserable. The more she thought of the incident of the cellar stairs, the more she blamed him for it. If he hadn't put her into such a state, it would never have happened. She would have remembered to tell him that the stairs had been removed, and then there just wouldn't have been any accident. But he had kept after her subtly, persistently, trying to get her to change her whole way of life, trying to get her to give up the theatre—and at a time when she felt particularly low about it, and in a quiet, *reasonable* tone that he could use better than anyone else—until she was ready to do anything to be free

of him. She hated him more than she ever hated poor Jim. She hated him more because she loved him more. He was the big man in her life, the man of whom she was proud, who was so far superior to any other man she had ever known, and then he had been so disappointing, so moralistic, so un-understanding!

She didn't want another incident like that. She had been horrified—of herself. Because she knew very well that the stairs had been taken up, and she knew very well what would happen to him if he went to the cellar for logs, and she just couldn't say a word to stop him! She sat there and let it happen. And when he gave a cry, and there was an awful sound of his body falling on an old wash-boiler, she couldn't help feeling better. She smiled. She enjoyed it. That was what scared her more than anything else. Of course if it had been a higher place, she would probably have called out and stopped him. She couldn't have borne to have him killed. But injured, yes, she could bear that, and even enjoy it. Perhaps she had figured the whole thing out neatly beforehand when she had had the stairs removed. She had called up from the City to tell the contractor to do the job, a day or two after she had met David in the City and he had already begun to try to change her.

He would never understand what she had built up. He was so understanding, so sympathetic, and yet at a certain point he didn't know anything at all about her. He had no idea what her career meant to her. He was quite willing to have her turn her back on it. Why? Because it 'wasn't worthy of her'. He had actually used those words. Because he didn't like the kind of plays she played in now. Because she was 'injuring herself'.

Was it just that he was jealous of her? No, he wasn't either so adolescent or so simple. He was a very unusual man. He expected too much of others. "What good is all the new knowledge we have about the mind if we don't use it, if we don't rebuild ourselves with it? We are what we

do. Then we've got to stop doing things that make us what we don't want to be. Yes, it's as simple as that. I'm not oversimplifying." That was the way he talked. In one of his books he wrote about the 'Promethean drive' and the diseases it can cause in people when 'they do not live it out.

He could easily overlook the other men in her life. He knew how little they meant to her. He had let her know that at once. He was never petty about such things. And of course he hadn't been as pure as the driven snow himself. There was the woman in Paris.

When he took her up it was on something that really mattered to her. That was the devil in him. He wanted to take away the one thing she had to have, the one thing that gave her life meaning. He might despise it, but it was just as much an art as what he practised.

Now in his letters he promised that if he ever came back—why hadn't she seen the plain hint?—he wouldn't bother her. She hoped not. She didn't want to go through *that* again. He had really scared her. Or rather, she had really scared herself.

When he let her alone, no man was more wonderful, no woman more fortunate. Also, when he did not try to save the world, when he did not have the reek of the laboratory in his clothes. She could have sworn that he smelt different when he came fresh from the laboratory, even though no chemicals were used there. Perhaps it was because animals were kept in cages on his floor for experimentation, and somehow their odour got faintly into his woollens, but in any case she always felt slightly sick when reminded thus physically of his profession. There *was* something inhuman about it. And she hated it.

She heard someone walking towards her on the crushed-rock path that led to the garage. If it was Greco, she wished he were walking on the grass. If it were someone else, she would have to invent some excuse for being there. No need to invent one beforehand. She never doubted her capacity

to find one when the occasion required it. If she thought too much about it, it was never as good as the spontaneous kind. The same way on-stage: when someone slipped up or dropped a line or something else went wrong, she would always prefer to take the emergency in her stride, without forethought. Some of her best inspirations had come to her that way. And she enjoyed that kind of risk-taking: it was even more exciting than poker.

It *was* Greco, and as if aware that the crushed rock might betray him he had already stepped on to the grass. Trust him to notice a detail of that sort and do the right thing! He was jittery—she had never seen him so tense—but even when he was not himself he was highly disciplined. At first she had thought his tension was due to the meeting with the Congressman, and his fear of being smeared as a Communist, but when she mentioned that to him discreetly he had seemed reconciled to such inconveniences. Quite possibly, in fact, he enjoyed them. Because they made him feel like a martyr. The trouble was probably something different. She recalled a remark that David had made about him: that he was orientated towards youth and would probably find life harder and harder as he got older. Many people were like that, especially the aggressive type that Greco so clearly exemplified. The greatest disappointment in his life had been the collapse of the People's Theatre, and it was quite likely, as he had remarked last night, that if it could have continued he would have been willing to be poor all his life. Now he had made over a million dollars, for he was an extremely shrewd bargainer—better than his rug-dealer father had ever thought of being—but perhaps it was only a consolation for something he wanted much more. He paid the bills for an actors' school that used the methods developed by the People's Theatre. And he always wore grey flannel suits and black neckties and white shirts with button-down collars—she could see his invariable costume now in starlight—both because they

had a savage Brooks Brothers austerity and because they had been worn by the well-to-do Amherst boys whose food he had brought to them. The suits and the neckties and the shirts were all of the very best quality. But he would have been willing, no doubt, to let their collars fray and their knees poke through, if only he were young again and had his old Marxist hopes of changing the world and was on his way to a rehearsal—or, as happened almost as often, a policy meeting—in the People's Theatre.

David had said that Greco, no less than she, was a victim of New York, as well as of the theatre. They were both superior New Yorkers, with enough brains and enough vigour to make distinct impressions upon a very mixed and a very sceptical cosmopolis, but they had to serve their fellow-citizens, and their fellow-citizens would not pay out their money for anything that made them really think or really feel. They wanted easily accepted thoughts and easily sentimentalised feelings. Under such conditions the theatre returned to its ancient adjacency to the whorehouse. As a social art no more could be expected of it. At such a time truth could not be spoken in a common emotional language. It was so hard to find and so hard to face that to expect any audience to join in its search became self-deception that was excusable only in the very young. And, cut off from a genuine search for truth, the theatre degenerated quickly into demagoguery or prostitution. For a long time even its best plays had not been comparable to other literary works of the same period. But it had a deep, primordial appeal, and it offered a quick path to money and fame, and so it attracted many talents. The more serious of them should at least know what they were doing.

"But an actor has to act," she had said, "and a director has to direct, and a——"

"A horse-player has to play the horses," David had replied, "and if he keeps it up he is sure to lose everything."

It was all so logical, but she disagreed with it completely. It was a relief now to see Greco coming towards her. He spoke her language. He knew what the theatre *could* be, and how beautiful it actually *was*, now and then. He didn't take such an inhuman attitude towards it. He loved it, he fought for it.

But her feelings were reaching out towards him, as they had unexpectedly done also at the dinner table—and just at a time when she had thought herself completely devoted to David and overjoyed at his homecoming—and she must put them in order. She must not let Greco be the beneficiary of her dislike of certain of David's ideas. She had made *that* mistake too often before! Rushing off to the labour leader and the others—just *because* they didn't come up to David's standards, just *because* they were human and absurd and power-crazy and exciting! Greco, for all his ability to handle audiences and other women, had never been able to handle her, and she didn't want him to, especially now. She wanted to keep him off-balance, as she had done so easily in the old W.P.A. days. She had always had a special knack with him, and she didn't want to lose it.

"Hello," she called in a low voice, as he came near. "Isn't it a heavenly night!"

"Yes, wonderful," he grunted in the tough tone he had taken when they had arranged to meet outdoors.

"This way," she said, lifting up the branch of a tree, and leading him out into a field which lay beyond her property, past Mr. Higginbotham's barn. "This leads to the ocean. I think East Hampton is as attractive as any village I know of in America." She had made a similar remark the night before, and he had challenged it. It might be a good way to establish a firm ascendancy over him because he had some silly proletarian prejudices that could easily be refuted.

"It has its other sides," Greco said grimly. "I can't forget

what it did to Lynette Marcus." He was repeating the same surly attack that he had made the night before, and in defence of a playwright for whom he did not very much care.

"But I know the owner of that house. Tom Winslow. He says he refused to rent it to her not because she was Jewish but because he found out she was a Communist."

"You expect me to believe that? It was a very simple case." He was definitely in a bad humour, and not strictly accurate in what he was saying. Tom of course had written an anti-Semitic letter, but there had also been the Communist angle, and that was the one that should be played up now.

"No, he's very reactionary and he's very stuffy, but it's more complicated than that. He went to see that play of hers that was running then, *The Clever Ones*, and then he had her checked up on. He found out she was a Communist, and so he wouldn't rent it to her." It was much better to act as if the anti-Semitic angle had never existed. Once you went into *that*, there was no end of unpleasantness.

"Just when she was all packed and ready to come here!"

"Do you know that company of his has never made any money since? The only income he has now comes from those houses of his, and sometimes he doesn't rent them, especially the big ones. She certainly did a job on him. I didn't realise she had so much influence with the union."

"That's one story I'm not buying."

"Oh, yes she did. I heard her say myself that she was going to get him."

"I don't see anything so attractive about East Hampton."

"You don't? I like it."

"You always did like things like this. Well, you were born in the lap of luxury. I wasn't, and I've never—"

"Go on, don't be so self-righteous, you like luxury as much as anyone!"

"Luxury? Me?"

"Yes, you! Those black ties of yours don't fool me any more. It was David who helped me to understand you. You made an anti-Fascist picture, but the Fascist was by far the most interesting character in it. 'The man who made that,' he said, 'was really in love with all the things he pretended to attack—love of power, love of luxury, and so forth.'" She was surprised—and rather dismayed—by her mention of David, whom she had intended to keep out of the conversation.

"Naturally, since he's such a terrific psychologist, he has to be right." Greco looked withdrawn. She had made a fearful mistake. When he felt withdrawn and misunderstood and persecuted, there was no doing anything with him.

"Of course not," she admitted. "He makes mistakes like everybody else. But I don't see anything wrong with having a love of power or a love of luxury. Everybody I've ever met has. Even the servants. Especially the servants. In my fellow-traveller days I was ashamed of such things, but I was stupid then. I'm a little more realistic now. Thank God for my French father! France will never go Communist." This was a better theme. She could put him on the defensive now.

"Well, you can see why I've got to get out of here. Your husband's coming back has changed everything." He didn't say it with much conviction.

"No! Why?"

"Well, you know how we used to disagree about nearly everything, and——"

"No! You're going to stay. I was thinking about that when I was out on the porch throwing darts. I always go out there when I want to think out something. I'm not going to change *anything* just because he's coming back. He's just going to walk in and hang up his hat, and everything is going to go on exactly as before. If I started making



changes for him, in no time at all he'd be wanting me to change entirely, give up the theatre, and so forth. We're not going to go through *that* all over again!"

"But, you see, I feel uncomfortable among all these people. They're so different from the kind I usually—" This was definitely lame, coming from one who could adapt so easily to anyone, who went everywhere, notebook in hand, asking questions.

"They'll be good for you. I've been listening to you to-day, what you were saying. In many ways you're just the same as you were before the War. You haven't grown up nearly as much as I thought you would. You could learn a lot from David. He's really extraordinary, if you can take him."

"Frankly, I always respected him and liked him, but I didn't agree with him."

"Who ever expected you to? He didn't! I didn't. *Zut!* I could explain it to you in French, but you wouldn't understand. That's another thing, why haven't you developed yourself more? You're still—now, look, I don't want to hurt your feelings, and I know you've been very busy, and you've had to concentrate to get where you are, but you see things the same way you used to see them. I don't know how to say it. Politically! That's it. Everything is politics to you. I wonder if you still talk about history as if you knew exactly what it was going to do? That's just a little crazy, Greco. You've got a lot to you, too much to go on that way. I hope I'm wrong, but— Here we are. Let's sit down here. Is that a ship out there?" They sat down on the sand, under a dune, and looked out at the ocean. It was exactly the same place where David had taken her twenty-two years before. She always went there when she wanted to be alone with the ocean or to talk with a friend. But she had never taken a lover there.

"I don't know." Greco was not at his best in natural surroundings. City-bred, he looked uneasy now.

"I thought you handled yourself very well in Washington." Now was the time to build him up.

"Yes? What paper did you read about it in?" He sounded interested.

"I don't remember. The *Times* or the *Tribune*, maybe both. Just admitted it and said you had made a big mistake. It made a good impression on everyone I talked to."

"It did?"

"Yes. You know, I watched you with Peter today. You're so painstaking. You can be so unselfish. You have wonderful things in you. Now that you've chosen freedom, you can really do things."

"Chosen freedom?"

"Wasn't there a book with a title like that? Some Russian who broke with them?" He wouldn't like this idea, she knew, but it would help to keep him under her thumb. It wouldn't do to let him play the Hollywood tycoon.

"Oh." He certainly didn't like it.

There was no talk for a while. They looked at the water. Greco wondered how he ought to talk to her. He was not at all pleased with the direction her conversation had taken. He had always had trouble with her, but at last he had expected to get the upper hand. She had definitely played up to him at the table, in a way she had never done before. His hopes had risen. He had begun to get aroused. But now that they were outdoors she handled him as if he were a talented child who had to be put on the right path, exactly as he himself had handled his own seventeen-year-old daughter not more than three weeks ago. If it hadn't been so painful, it might have been funny.

"Look," he said in a self-assertive tone, "this is kind of funny. You're talking to me as if I were a kid. I talk this way myself to Daphne—when I get a chance to be with her."

"How old is she now?" It was a diversion tactic, and he

recognised it as such, but he couldn't do anything about it.

"Seventeen. Getting ready to go to college in the fall. Gee, sometimes I can't believe it." He felt overcome by a horror of getting old.

"She must be very pretty. Where's she going?"

"Vassar."

"Isn't that where Maggie went?"

"Yes."

"I was very sorry about——"

"I got your letter. Thanks."

"There was something awfully kind and gentle about Maggie."

"Yes."

"I can imagine how you feel."

"Aw, you don't know anything about it! Look, I can talk to you." He hadn't intended to confide in her, but he found himself doing it—and enjoying it. "There I was, in London, and everybody knew why I went there, and then I got the cablegram. We were in bed together when they called up about it. When they couldn't give me the message over the telephone I knew right away what had happened. The next day was in all the papers."

"You mustn't blame yourself for it." She took his hand. "You really mustn't. When people do that, no one else is ever responsible. It's something in themselves."

"You don't have to cheer me up! I can take it. I've been through the whole thing."

"I know, I know," she said soothingly, and put his hand against her cheek and kissed it. She had never done this before. His breathing deepened.

"Look, why did you give me those come-ons at the dinner table, and then get me out here and give me a lecture?"

"What are you talking about?" she asked softly.

"You know what I'm talking about!"

"Sssh!" She kissed his hand again.

"I'd better get out of here. Your husband's coming back."

"No, no. I want you to stay."

"Look, I could get interested in you. Seriously."

"Oh, no."

"I could!"

"I just can't believe that." She kissed his hand again, letting her breath blow lightly against his palm. She was really playing up to him, in an absolutely unprecedented manner, and he found himself pouring out a plan that had only once crossed his mind and that he had not taken seriously then. But he said it to her now as if it lay very close to his heart.

"Zachary's willing to do a Stendhal novel if I'll direct. *The Charterhouse of Parma*. I don't think it's my dish, I don't like costume pictures, but the Duchess would be a wonderful part for you."

"Sanseverina?" The way she repeated the name of the heroine showed how deeply he had caught her.

"Chester Odell has been talking about it for years," he went on with enthusiasm. "He wants to write the script. Maybe we could all work together. Maybe I ought to try something new. It's subtle, sophisticated, European. Maybe——"

"Sanseverina?"

"You really deserve a break. It would be the best way for you to get into pictures. Play a lead right off. And what a part!"

"I wouldn't want to do it unless you would help me with it."

"But you know so much more about those things than I do. All that court life."

"I wouldn't think of it unless I had you there to go over every line of it with me."

"Really?" His hairy hand turned and ran over her cheek lightly. Instantly she seemed to go on guard.

"Who's that?" She pointed down the beach at a woman who had a flashlight in her hand.

"Where?" He feared he had made a mistake.

"That woman. Is that Nancy? I'll bet it is! Help me get up. I don't want her to find us here."

"Nancy? Oh, yes. Say, what's wrong with her?" He held out a hand awkwardly, and she rose to her feet. He sensed another diversion tactic, but there didn't seem to be anything else he could do.

"I don't know." She brushed sand off her skirt.

"Is she a Lesbian? I noticed she followed you into your room last night."

"Lesbian? Some day I'll tell you all about Nancy. She isn't a real one, but— I hope you noticed how quickly I threw her out too. I'm used to being talked about, but that's one taste I never acquired. No, that isn't Nancy! Well, let's go back, anyway. I'd better not start them talking, especially now. We can see each other again. David isn't going to change *anything*. Tell me about the Stendhal novel. Is there really any chance of their doing it?" She took his arm, and pressed close to him and asked him questions.

She certainly was attractive. And much surer of herself than she used to be. The years had only made her more desirable. Some women were like that. She made him feel that he would never be himself until he had had her. For some time he had been bored with actresses, it was so easy to see through their tricks. But she was different. And she had something he wanted. He was not quite sure what it was, but he needed it. He needed it badly. He had always needed it. It came from the Mediterranean, his homeland. It was dark and mysterious. It was poetry.

"Look!" He disengaged his arm from hers, and picked up a pebble. "I'm going to hit that boat." He pointed to a grey whaleboat which had been left on the beach by fishermen. He threw.

The pebble flew over the boat, at least three feet above it. She took his arm again. "You'd be wonderful for Stendhal," she said. The trouble with her was that he could never be sure that she meant a single thing she said. It had always been that way. She acted like a woman who had known a man who had made her feel that other men didn't really exist. And he was one of the other men. It made him furious. No wonder his aim was lousy. He couldn't hit a thing when he felt like that.

## X

### HOMING FATHER

PETE woke up at eight o'clock. He felt happier this morning than he had felt since childhood, and he wondered why. Sunlight already warmed a few inches of screen beneath lowered black blinds. The day would be fair. Pink spiræa was visible outdoors. But when he turned and looked, no head lay on the mussed pillow next to him. His father had risen.

He found him in the central room, where they had talked the night before. The quiet concentration of his laboratory had been re-established. He sat at a gate-legged table, on a joint stool, writing in a brown pocket-size notebook with a cheap mechanical pencil. He had shaved and he looked rested. No longer was he politely concealing his fatigue. A clean shirt, a tweed jacket and flannel trousers made him seem more presentable. Most of his vigour appeared to have returned to his lean body with a few hours' sleep, for it came out that he had risen at six, before Tim, who had been content to go to seven o'clock mass. As usual, his son realised, with his old contempt for relaxa-

tion he had risen much too early. The black patch had been restored to the empty eye. On closer examination it proved to be an unusually fine patch, of the very best silk and unexpectedly large. It had a kind of *chic*.

"How do you feel?" David asked his son after a glance at his face and his body, clad only in shorts.

"Fine, fine. I had a marvellous dream.

"What about?"

"I forget."

"Good. Then I won't have to analyse it."

"I don't know why I have so much confidence in you. All you do is kid."

"Oh, but that's my secret. And anyway, I promised your mother I wouldn't be *too* serious."

"I haven't a toothbrush."

"Your Uncle Tim put one out for you in the bathroom. And use my razor. I put in a clean blade."

"Maybe you *can* handle her! I still don't believe it, but maybe you can." With this modified vote of confidence Pete went to the bathroom.

When he came out, breakfast was on the table where his father had been writing. Uncle Tim, once again wearing his plastic apron, had laid the places and put out large glasses of orange juice and large bowls of oatmeal. He was in the kitchen cooking kidneys.

"Don't try to tell me you have those every day," David was saying. "Where did you get them?"

"Oh, now, there's a widow woman down the road, and she keeps any God's quantity of turkeys and chicken and ice-cream in that deep freezer of hers, and I was after remembering how both you and your father liked—"

David chided him, but it did no good. The meat was already on the fire and soon on the table.

"Was it low mass?" David asked.

"Yes," said the old man, and more sternly, "Don't you ever go yourself any more?"

"No, I'm a heretic." He did not smile.

"Tell me this, how do you get along without it?"

"I don't have any trouble."

"I just can't believe it." The old man shook his head. Pete listened as if they were discussing a point in thermodynamics. He had been christened in the Episcopal Church, as the most neutral and respectable of all faiths, and then his religious education had been forgotten.

When they were ready to go they found that Tim had already put David's luggage into the black Ford.

"I don't want to leave," David confessed. "I'm scared. I feel like a character in one of the plays that Carlotta played in—one of the good ones, when she was studying at the Russian woman's school. He was an awful fool. I think it was by Chekhov. He got sentimental about a bookcase, 'Dear, honoured bookcase!' he said. 'Hail to thee who for more than a hundred years——!' That's the way I feel about this house. I feel as if I were leaving early America and going to modern America. East Hampton always did do that to me. Sag Harbor is so much easier to take. Well, good-bye, Tim."

Pete started the motor. He was surprised by what his father had said. It was his first confession of misgivings.

Tim, who was shaking his nephew's hand through the open window, pleaded, "You'll come back soon for another talk, won't you?"

"Right!" promised David. And when the car had started, and they had waved good-bye, he asked Pete, "Drive down by the harbour again. I'd like to look at it." And when they got there he pointed to a pier where a yacht was refuelling through a hose. "There used to be a schooner anchored there, when I was a kid. And do you know who lived on it? A man and a woman, and they weren't married! It was the town scandal, I can tell you. And the man came ashore to get food and things, and then went right back aboard, and vanished into the cabin with his mate. They



were pretty good-looking, too, both of them. Oh, how we wondered about them! They lived there for four years. Then one day they just disappeared. Left the schooner and skipped town. Never did hear what happened to them." It seemed to be a curiously oblique way of declaring his love for his home town.

Pete turned the car towards East Hampton when his father told him to. As they passed the green and white of a Sag Harbor physician, David said, "I've often wondered what would have happened to me if I'd practised medicine here."

"You'd have had both your eyes at least."

"But I wouldn't have seen as much with them."

"Is it fatal to stay in a small place? I've wondered about that. Say I could get something near home and just—"

"It depends. *You* have to go out first and have the big city experience and the world experience. *You* have to be uprooted first before you can hope to be re-rooted."

"Why do *I* have to do it?"

"Because you have talent and education. There isn't one bit of the whole adventure you can avoid. Then when you're middle-aged, if you're still in one piece and can raise the money, you can go to your small place and try to unite your macrocosm with your microcosm. But there's no short-cut."

Pete wished there were, but said nothing. His father went on, "You're one of the very small minority who even have the possibility of a choice. You're very lucky."

"I don't feel lucky," said Pete.

His father ignored this, was silent for a while, then said, "That's where I couldn't get a lift." He pointed to some trees that were part of a low-lying, wind-blown forest of scrub pine that lined each side of the turnpike.

Pete looked and smiled. "Gosh, I couldn't have been more than ten then. The whole town buzzed about it."

"I wonder what happened to my machete?"

"It's still there. Or it was last year."

"Maybe I'll come out here again."

"Remember, turn the little key! This one!" Pete counselled.

It was a familiar legend locally: the young psychologist, whom East Hampton did not know whether to regard as a glory or an eccentric, had become interested in botany during a summer vacation, had gone looking for rare grasses in these same woods, had cut some of them with a machete sent by a friend in Cuba, put some specimens in the band of his felt hat, so that they stood up like a barbaric crown, and then returned to his car to go home again. But it would not start. He had absently-mindedly left the ignition on, and the battery was dead. When he tried to hail a ride, waving his long knife and unaware of his headdress, other cars had sped by him, as from a madman, and finally he had to walk home.

As they approached a farmhouse David said, "I worked there one summer. Thirty dollars a month and room and board. I thought it was terrific. I made ninety dollars and I saved ninety dollars. Didn't spend a cent. Hitched a ride back to Sag Harbor to see Mother. And then there was more money in September when the potato crop was ready. After school."

"I've often thought," Pete said contritely, "I've had things too easy."

"Well, if you have, you won't have them very long."

"That's cheerful!"

"If there's one thing I've learned from my travels, it's that the Haves can't afford to be merely conservative."

"Is there going to be a war?"

"There are going to be wars."

"Gosh, you seem awfully easy-going, but really you're as tough as hell. Well, you'll need it," Pete added with a grim smile. "You've certainly got your work cut out for you. Will you talk to her the way you talked to all those patients

you've been talking to? I think that's the right way! She'd respect that!"

"Pete, Pete, your mother's not a patient. There's nothing wrong with her."

"That's what you think."

"Just when I think you're getting free from your bitterness you say something like that that makes me realise that—oh, let's drop it. The Library hasn't changed at all, except that it has more ivy." He nodded towards a low-lying reddish building with ox-eyes in its roof which might have been built in Cromwell's day.

The car halted momentarily as it came to the main street of East Hampton. A windmill—symbol of the village, printed beneath the dollar sign of the cheques of the local bank—confirmed their arrival amid scenes of a studious tranquillity that was the aim of the Ladies' Village Improvement Society, which forbade the erection of factories in an unblemished gem of antique restoration.

"And the cemetery and the Village Green and St. Luke's," David went on. "I could almost be in England. Except that England didn't seem half so Old English."

He was silent during the rest of the drive, and Pete also. In a very short time they turned into the crushed-rock driveway which led up to their home. It was looking especially well, with its lawn and hedges freshly trimmed—and greened by recent rains. Wind ran its fingers gently over the keys of the maples that guarded its approach. When their car stopped, the place seemed enveloped in the extra quiet of the Sabbath. Then some tools rattled in the back of a station wagon as it passed over a bump in the busy public road from which the house had been withdrawn.

Pete watched carefully the scene that followed. His mother, whom his father had telephoned again at about eleven o'clock the night before to say that Pete had guessed where he was and would spend the night with him and that they would arrive about ten o'clock in the morning, was up

and dressed and ready for them. Her simple white dress had been made for her by a famous woman designer and had cost—Pete knew because he had seen some bills in her desk—three hundred dollars. It flowed after her lithe, well-held figure with milkmaid artlessness as she opened the front door and ran across the porch towards them. Pete had seen her make similar entrances on the stage, full of morning charm, and his mistrustful ears awaited the pretty torrent of well-chosen words that were sure to pour from her discreetly made-up lips. Under his father's influence he was disposed to think somewhat more charitably of her than usual, but now he expected to see her at her most artificial.

She stopped short "What happened?" she cried with unmistakable pain. "What happened to your eye?" Pete was pleasantly surprised to hear a note of genuineness in her voice. And looking at his father through her eyes, he became more aware than he had been before that his father seemed to be suffering from more than an eye injury: he looked generally run-down. Long-standing habits of excessive self-demands were taking their toll.

"Hello, dear! How are you?" murmured his father, and took her in his arms. At that moment Pete was astonished to find that his critical aloofness towards her had entirely melted, and his eyes were full of tears. Irrelevantly he reached an understanding of her: she was much more to be pitied than his father, for she had no hope, she was making do with pathetic substitutes, while his father was full of it.

"What happened?" she repeated.

His new insight overwhelmed Pete. He put his arms about both of his parents, and hugged them.

His mother looked up at him incredulously, and let her head rest on his arm for a moment. "Darling!" she said tenderly. "Aren't you proud of him?" she cried to his father.

"He's taller than I am," said his father. All of them had

tears in their eyes, and all of them seemed to be saying, "Let's hope it will work out this time!"

They went indoors. The first person Pete saw was Cyrilla, dressed up in an attractive yellow dress and looking radiant. When he started to apologise to her she forgave him quickly, and begged him to introduce her to his father. "I want to meet the man who wrote this." She had a book in her hand.

Greco and Cyril were also indoors, reading Sunday newspapers. They jumped up and made a fuss over David. But Pete couldn't see things very clearly just then. He was so overwhelmed by the discovery he had made. He loved his mother again. That was the last thing he had expected.

## PART TWO

### XI

#### LUNCHEON AT THE CLUB

CARLOTTA sat her dressing-table, getting ready for lunch. The sun shone high above the ancient silver poplar outside her bedroom window, and its light rolled out like a second carpet on her floor. The time was almost one o'clock. Down in the driveway the Whitlocks were getting into their car. They were going to visit friends in Southampton for their midday meal, while she took her other guests to the Club. She could hear David's voice below her window, saying good-bye to Cyril and Nancy and Cyrilla after their car door had slammed shut.

She had been listening to him for a long time, at least half an hour, while he dodged the questions that were asked him as if he were an oracle, and she was still trying to understand the strange feeling that had taken possession of her. Quickness at knowing what she felt or didn't feel, what she liked or didn't like, had been developed in her to a rare degree by her profession. In the theatre you had to know how you felt about almost anything, and at once. It was *not* a slow-moving art. But this time she distrusted her quickness.

And the attitude of the Whitlocks towards him also disturbed her. Cyril treated him with such respect that he might have been at least a bishop. Cyrilla raved to him about one of his books. And Nancy, as ever, needled him.

That was what disturbed her most of all.

Cyril was saying things like, "Do you really think the Chinese have anything in their philosophy that Christianity hasn't also got?"

Cyrilla was saying things like, "But how are we going to create the saving remnant who will save the world? Gide says the world will be saved by a handful of intellectuals."

Nancy was saying things like, "I can't wait to see the wonderful things you must have bought in India for Carlotta. When your trunk comes, of course."

It was Nancy's attitude towards him that disturbed her most. Because, although she loved him and was very happy to have him home, she felt the same way. She felt both sympathetic and hostile to him.

She would have insisted to herself that this was an incorrect observation, that somewhere her quickness had slipped up, that she couldn't possibly be as nasty as Nancy, if a few minutes ago she hadn't found herself ringing for Ticky and almost on the point of giving her David's battered camel-skin brief-case, which she knew contained the manuscript of his latest book, and telling Ticky to throw it out because it contained only worthless papers and was too old to keep any longer. She had barely caught herself in time. She had awakened as from a sleep and invented some other errand for Ticky to do. And such an act of hostility, as she had learned so repetitiously from her analyst before she had stopped her visits to his office, meant that there was much in her relations with David that she did not understand at all. Fortunately, it had not occurred. She had awakened just in time. But it had been well on its way to becoming a matter of record, and it scared her. Less than three hours after David's return she had almost injured him again, and in a very serious way. And it would be wrong, definitely wrong, to injure a man who had so clearly overtapped his reserves of strength and health.

She loved him, she was genuinely happy to have him back, she looked forward to being alone with him that

night, she was grateful to him for the change he had wrought in Peter, she found him far superior to the men who had been on hand to welcome him, she was glad she had repulsed the advances of Greco and Nancy—which caused her to feel quite virginal—but he made her furious. And wretched. Once again he was challenging her, calling into question everything she believed in, and nonetheless strongly because he said nothing. His silence was even worse than sermons. She could have laughed at sermons.

He had noticed the quick change in her attitude towards him, and had considerably gone downstairs, and his considerateness had only made her feel worse. It was not easy, being married to a man like that. And now she must pretend that she didn't feel the way she did. It was a performance that she didn't want to give, a Sunday *matinée* that she hadn't counted on at all, on that Sunday especially. And if she weren't careful she would give an awful show, she would grovel, because she felt so guilty about feelings that she shouldn't be feeling at all.

She forced herself to get up from her dressing-table and to go downstairs. The action stirred her to more positive emotions, and she was glad that she had arranged to take her guests to the Club for lunch. To get out in the open air might release her from her morbid thoughts.

When she had brought Marie-José down for the weekend she had told her that she was going to rent the house for the summer. "You can have Sunday off, to go to the beach," she had promised the large-haunched, gruff-voiced Frenchwoman. "The only big dinner we'll want will be on Saturday night. I'll take my guests to the Club for lunch on Sunday, and then we'll serve cold cuts Sunday evening." It had been her plan to let the Murrays have Marie-José along with the house for the summer. She knew that Marie-José would return to her in the autumn, because Marie-José liked the gay, generous theatrical people who dined with her in the winter-time. Also, Carlotta paid her very



well, and appreciated the quality of her cooking as other New Yorkers seldom did. But now, of course, Carlotta had decided not to let the Murrays rent the cottage or have Maric-José. That had been the first thing she had announced to David when she saw him. The injury to his eye had made her decide to spend as much of the summer with him as possible, and not to rent the house.

But now she also knew that he presented a much more difficult problem than she had realised at first. Although he said nothing critical (indeed was most adaptable in every way) he made her feel shabby. "Why? Because he was embarked on what Cyril called "the greatest adventure of all"? Perhaps, as her unlamented analyst had been so overfond of saying, her early religious training was stronger in her, even now, than she imagined. Perhaps she felt a reverence and an envy of anyone who even inspired to sanctity, and perhaps that *was* the aim of David, though he himself denied it and ridiculed it. In any case, within a few hours he had made her as dubious of some of her deepest beliefs as he had ever done back in her fellow-traveller days when he had said that her fascination with communism was merely a *rentier's* attempt to find a safe security, a hedge against the future. And now without a word, by merely looking at her, he called her anti-communism the same thing. She thought she had found a sound belief in a disillusioned, anti-Stalinist acceptance of general doom. Neither capitalism nor communism nor any other 'ism' would avail. Obviously, the world was headed for one grave disaster after another, and one's only possible peace of mind lay in writing it off as a total loss.

At first such a thought had distressed her, but later it had given her comfort and a kind of absolution: if so vast a catastrophe were inevitable, why need she bother about her own peccadilloes? Why need she pay attention to the obvious flaws of a career in the theatre? But David, by his mere presence, also challenged *this* attitude; silently held

out the hope of Occasional Glory amid General Doom; silently insisted that glory could be won by strength of character; caused a young girl to ask him how the world would be saved; and threatened the private consolations of his wife. She must take action, she must rally her forces. Her world, her way of life, was in jeopardy. To seek to injure him by destroying his manuscript would have been a bad mistake, but it had been caught and avoided in time, and now she must find other ways to combat him, and action itself would suggest them. His spirituality was definitely excessive, but the right reply to it would take time. She always found her best answers without forethought, and now she felt better merely by walking downstairs. Her confidence grew with every step.

Her first act was to apologise to him for not being able to offer him Sunday dinner at home. She repeated her story of the promise to Marie-José and said, "I'm afraid we'll have to go to the Club," although she had said it before.

He smiled. "I can remember the time when we refused to belong to it." This recalled a period in the early years of their marriage when they had refused to avail themselves of the privileges that their money and their position in society made possible.

"That's all over now," she said quickly and decisively, and they got into her black Ford, with Pete at the wheel, and Gillham and Greco at his side, and drove to the Club. In the back seat David took her hand and they smiled at each other, while she thought with a growing sense of assurance, 'I can handle him!'

They had barely sat down at their table when Gillham asked David, "Tell me, Dr. Holderness, how did you find things over there?" It was not the first time that question had been asked David by one of the guests, in one form or another, since his arrival, but until then there had always been some interruption, usually another question, that made it unnecessary for him to talk. Now, however, she

feared that they might be in for a serious discussion of the kind that she was determined to prevent, and so she decided to take things in hand at once, declare a policy, set a tone.

There were only five of them at the table: herself and David, Pete, Gillham, and Greco. At the moment, because there were no waiters at this open-air, self-service meal, Pete had gone to the bar to get their drinks.

"Now none of that!" Carlotta announced gaily but firmly to Gillham. "I'm not going to let politics spoil this beautiful day."

"I can remember when you took an interest in politics," Greco observed.

"I was crazy."

"I guess you always were a *dilettante* about them."

"Tell me truthfully, do you believe that politics ever made any actor give a better performance?"

"Sure."

"Well, I don't. But let's get away from all that! It's too beautiful today, and I'm surrounded by four very attractive men." She smiled up at Pete, who returned just then with their drinks on a tray. She enjoyed the new affection that he had shown her, and had already decided to tell him to go to a tailor in the City and order some new clothes.

"Perhaps you'd like to give us a suitable topic," Greco suggested.

"Greco! You're usually so kind! Thanks for the drinks, dear. Did everybody get what they wanted?" She raised her glass, and proposed a toast. "Chin chin! That's Chinese for double chin."

Gillham snorted with laughter. "Oh, I love her. I love her!" He was more attractive when American spontaneity brushed aside his British affectations. And she congratulated herself that she knew how to dispel his brief seriousness. "You don't mind, Doctor?"

"Not at all," said David. "So do I."

"Well, I thought I ought to talk a little Chinese to you, darling, since you've just been there."

"Were you in China, too?" asked Greco. "Tell us about Mao. He must be very remarkable."

"Now, now!" warned Carlotta. She waved to someone at a near-by table. "Don't look now, but there's my ex."

"How's Jim?" David asked, also waving at a man who sat by himself and seemed unaware of the bright sunshine, the yellow chairs, the lithe-bodied girls in bathing-suits that were all around him. Carlotta reflected comfortably that it was impossible for her to remember or imagine the day when she had been married to him.

"Oh, he feels better now that he's been made president of the K.A.s." She saw an opportunity to work in a gag that she had heard somewhere.

"Who are the K.A.s?" Gillham asked.

"Out here in East Hampton we have two kinds of A.s—the A.A.s and the K.A.s."

"I know who the A.A.s are—Alcoholics Anonymous. They do a lot of good work." Gillham played a perfect straight man, feeding her exactly the lines she wanted, without even knowing it.

"Well, Jim used to be the head of the A.A.s. Now he's the head of the Known Alcoholics."

Gillham roared. "Oh, I love her, I love her!"

"What about another drink? I only take one, but this is my party. Whenever you want one, just go over and sign my name. And when you're hungry there's food in the other direction. Just tell them you're with me." Now she felt better. Her jokes were going over, and she had the party nicely in hand. Whatever developed, she would be able to handle it.

"I think you were right to join the Club again," David remarked. "It must be very handy when you're entertaining theatre friends."

"Exactly, dear," she said appreciatively, and felt happy

indeed, for his remark meant that there was not going to be any repetition of his mistake of '45.

"What makes East Hampton tick, Doctor? The summer colony?" Greco asked.

"Yes," she said quickly, "and the natives do nothing but gripe about them. The natives feel very superior."

"The local people are descended from whalers," said Pete.

"No," said Greco. "You mean Sag Harbor. I read about that in *Moby Dick*."

"I mean East Hampton. They\* used to do off-shore whaling—right out there." Pete pointed under a canopy at the sparkling waters of the Atlantic Ocean which, because a gentle south-west wind made them roll, and because the canopy cut off all signs of land, gave the impression that the Club was a steamship on a pleasure cruise and all present were bound luxuriously for the Caribbean.

"Right out there?"

"Yes!" so it isn't any wonder that the locals feel a little bitter about having to make their living now off tourists."

"Well, God knows," said Carlotta, "there's more sperm in the tourists than there ever was in the whales."

Gillham hooted. "Oh, I love her, I love her!" He put his arm about her shoulders and gave her a squeeze. "You don't mind, Doctor?"

"Not at all," said David, who was also laughing. "So do I."

"Darling." Carlotta pressed his hand across the table.

"I hear that some of the best young painters in the country live around here," said Greco, who was indefatigable, and addressed himself to David. "Abstractionists."

"Yes, but they're a bunch of puritans," said Carlotta quickly. "They all sleep with their own wives. There are a lot of illegitimate children around here—one of the

highest rates in the country—but most of their fathers are house-painters, not easel-painters. When I was a girl in Paris we used to sit around and gossip about the easel-painters. Now the easel-painters sit around and gossip about the house-painters. There's one house-painter who seems to have impregnated half the village. They call him the Bonacker Beaut. But these abstractionists! Pahl! They'll never paint anything good!"

"When I was a kid," David remarked, "illegitimacy used to flourish here too, but a little higher up."

She glanced at him, and they exchanged a smile. Pete looked out to sea.

"Were you born here?" Gillham asked with surprise.

"Oh yes, I'm a native. I grew up in Sag Harbor, but I was born in Springs. My mother was visiting relatives there. I'm a real Bonacker."

"How do you spell that?" asked Greco.

David spelled it.

"What's it come from?"

"Oh, there's a place name here, Accabonac, and somehow——"

"What's Sag Harbor come from?" asked Gillham. "I always liked that name."

"Well, Sag comes from Sagaponack, which means in the Indian language 'place where the ground nuts grow.' Ground-nuts mean potatoes. But Sag Harbor——"

"We have a little book about Indian place names," said Carlotta wearily. "When we go back home you can all read it. But now what about enjoying this beautiful day, without so much erudition?"

"I know a playwright who comes from this part of Long Island," said Greco sternly. "He writes about pent-houses. Why doesn't he write about the Bonackers?" He took out an expensive black French notebook-wallet, and made a note with a gold pencil.

"That's a good ideal!" Carlotta said with enthusiasm.

"You ought to see the way some of them live. There's another *Tobacco Road* lying right under our feet."

"I don't see why you're so critical of the abstractionists," said Pete. "The work they do is miles above anything that's ever been done in the American theatre." He looked challengingly at his mother, while she regretted the unimportant issue that put her in danger of losing his new affection.

"That highbrow stuff?" she jeered, unable to drop the issue, though she wanted to.

"Yes."

"Nobody understands it."

"Those who can see understand it."

"Well, I can't see, then. I'm blind."

"It's nothing to boast of."

"But the American theatre has had so many wonderful performances, so many wonderful plays——"

"That's bunk, Mother, and you know it. Even our best theatre has never reached the level of our best painting. It has to appeal to too many people, to survive economically.—Isn't that true?" he demanded of Greco.

"I'm no perfectionist. I use the existing media. I want to reach the people," said Greco, as if reciting an old credo, and then added with emphasis, "I believe in the people."

"I don't believe in the people," said Pete. "I believe in the individual. The people are always wrong."

Gillham took a drink and looked at the pink bathing-trunks of a tall blonde girl who passed near the table. David listened carefully to his son, without change of expression.

"The people are always right," said Greco firmly. "Some day we'll educate them."

"They'll never be educated. Only a few will ever be educated," said Pete.

"I don't see abstract art yet either," said Greco with a winning smile. "But some day I will. I like Picasso and

Matisse, and I've bought some, but these Americans—well, where there's so much smoke there must be some fire."

"I don't know how we ever got on this disagreeable subject," said Carlotta, wondering just where she had let the situation get out of hand.

"What do *you* think, Father?"

"How could I know anything about it?"

"You wrote some wonderful letters about the paintings you saw in Paris," said Pete, "and some of them were abstract."

"Yes, tell us your ideas, Doctor," Greco urged, and then added more sardonically, "I remember you used to have ideas about moving pictures too."

"You know, you're awfully cagey, Doctor," Gillham remarked. "All morning we've been trying to get you to talk, and you haven't said a thing."

"Go on, Father."

"Some other time," said David. "Your mother wants us to eat now. Don't you, dear?"

"Yes, let's eat," said Carlotta gratefully. "I don't know why it is, but people can get even more bitter about art than they get about politics or religion."

"No! I'm interested," Greco insisted. "Please, Doctor!"

"No!" said Carlotta with finality. "Let's eat now." She rose. "This way. Self-service. You all have to get your trays. I recommend the roast beef. It's really divine here." And she led the way to an elegant little cafeteria, where she spoke French gaily to a man behind a counter who wore a tall white chef's cap, although it was his job to slice beef or ladle out curried chicken into rings of rice.

"Now tell me, Doctor, how did you find things over there?" Gillham asked when he had returned to their table with his meal on a tray and was laying it out on the table before him.

"None of that!" Carlotta insisted. She was sitting at the table, with vichyssoise and roast beef and salad and iced



black coffee before her, waiting for her guests to arrive with their own meals. "He is dying for every scrap of information he can get about Germany," she said to David. "He was telling me last evening. He says that everything the German factories can make for years has already been ordered. But don't tell him anything."

"Why, I could read about that," Gillham protested. "I thought the doctor might tell me about other things."

"What other things?" She did not hide her doubt that he could be interested in anything that did not involve money.

"Lots of things. I read. I read a book a week." He smiled, stoutly insisting that he had extra-financial interests, while failing to specify them. "Come on, Doctor, tell us about your travels. You must have a lot to say."

"Yes," Greco said, as if enjoying the sensation of finding himself in agreement with the Wall Street man on at least one subject, "we've had enough polite chit-chat. Let's talk!" He frowned at Carlotta.

"I was under the impression that that's what we had been doing," she said icily. "Does conversation have to sound like a newspaper?"

Greco side-stepped her. "Tell us about the concentration camps, Doctor. I was reading an article on the plane which said that you are one of the top men in psychosomatic medicine. Is it really true that the health of prisoners in Buchenwald actually got better because the S.S. men were so rough on them? That sounds crazy to me. Like mysticism. A lot of the things I read about science sound crazier and crazier."

She felt that she could no longer direct the tide of attention away from David and towards herself. Apparently he did nothing to attract it, but she felt about him as she had felt about an actor who had once ruined a scene that she was supposed to dominate—by rattling a newspaper behind his back while she talked. The audience had not listened to her, it had looked at him. And now David was taking

her small audience away from her, and without saying a word. "I see," she remarked bitterly, as if to an invisible onlooker, "the only things worth talking about are war and disease."

Gillham did not even hear her. His eyes were shining with excitement. "Is 'it really true, Doctor? Their health improved because they were treated rough?"

"What sadistic bug has bitten you?" Pete demanded, impressed with the strangeness of Gillham's reaction.

"First of all, is it true that the prisoners actually did—?" Greco began.

"I hope this isn't giving you any ideas about how to handle people over here!" Pete said to Gillham.

"—actually did get rid of old heart diseases and so forth while they were in prison? Because their will to live was strengthened by persecution? That's what I'd like to know," Greco persisted.

"I give up," Carlotta sighed. "The only fit subjects for civilised conversation, it seems, are death, disease, despair, darkness, and—" She paused for a word.

"But I'd rather hear you about abstract painters any day," said Pete to his father.

"One thing at a time," Greco suggested with a friendly smile.

They were all looking at David.

"All right, I give in," said Carlotta wearily.

He glanced at her, and reached across the table and patted her hand. "When a man has an audience like this, he ought to sell tickets. But my wife is better at handling audiences than I'll ever—"

"I'll buy one," said Pete. "I was with this man last night, I listened to him, I studied him. All my life I've been looking for a teacher, and at last I've found him. The only one I've ever known who really had something to say. My own father! But can you ever get him to open his mouth? No, he always shuts up and makes *you* talk!" It

was unexpected and it came from the heart, and it affected her the way a well-played part affected her in the theatre, even when the actor was an enemy. In an instant she lost her jealousy of her husband and joined enthusiastically in her son's admiration of him. She was moved. She was ashamed of her pettiness. Her love for David returned as quickly as it had gone.

"Why, Peter, that was beautiful! Come over here and let me kiss you," she cried. And to David, "Darling, go ahead and talk about anything you want to!"

"But you know me, dear. I don't *like* to talk any more."

"Go on! Talk about anything you want to. Remember how you used to talk when you were a medical student? I'll be the devoted young wife again, hanging on every word." She was quite pleased with this new rôle that she had written for herself, and was just getting into it, when a clerk appeared from the Club office with word that there was a long-distance call for her from New York. She went to the telephone in a very good humour.

## XII

### INTRUSION FROM THE EAST

WHEN she came back from the telephone she felt still better. She had very good news and took a long time telling it. The call had come from a New York producer and had been relayed from her home. She was particularly interested in the effect of her news upon David, for it involved a play of the type that he did not feel 'worthy' of her. So far as she could see, the congratulations he offered were entirely sincere. The producer had told her that a Hollywood star whom he had signed to play the leading

rôle in a summer theatre tour of *His French Wife* had been seriously injured overnight in an automobile accident. After a quick consideration of alternatives, the producer had decided to offer the part to Carlotta, rather than cancel the production or seek anyone else. It was of course in the same play that Carlotta had had her best-known starring part on Broadway, two seasons before. It was a sexy bedroom farce. Later it had been made into a somewhat less sexy film, with the Hollywood star in the part that Carlotta had created on the stage. Carlotta's feelings had been hurt when the producer had chosen the Hollywood star, in preference to herself, for a tour of the best summer theatres, and now she felt that fortune, by breaking the star's jaw and laying open her forehead, had truly smiled.

"Morty wanted to give me five hundred a week," she said to Greco, after she had told them all slowly of the accident and the offer. "But I knew that she was going to get fifteen hundred, plus a share of the take, so I told him I wouldn't consider it for a cent less. He argued for a while, but finally gave in." It did no harm to let it be thought that she was going to get still more than the flat one thousand a week that she had been glad to settle for.

"Nice going," said Greco with the complacent good will of one whose price was much higher.

"So I'll rent the East Hampton house after all," Carlotta told David. "The Murrys can have it. Good thing I didn't call them."

"But, Mother," Pete protested, "what about us?"

"Oh, you two can live in the apartment in the City. Or there must be some rooms out here, if you want to——"

"But after all that Father has gone through——"

"We'll discuss it later," David announced, and after a look at him Pete said no more.

The prospect of "working again in the theatre," as she put it, improved the morale of Carlotta, which, while it had been good before the telephone call was received, was,

she had often discovered, like a specially built racing motor, capable of more than the ordinary number of gear shifts, that now went effortlessly into a new high. Her table was visited by a friend, a woman with a droopy figure and the face of a petulant child, who had large brown crêpy pads under eyes that lighted up when she made the acquaintance of Greco. The name of this woman was Mrs. Willoughby and she brought gossip of a well-known surgeon with a summer home near-by who, although he was a Catholic and the father of four children, had got a divorce from his wife in order to marry another lady, much richer and more prominent than she, who bore him a child but three weeks after their marriage. Now a reform movement threatened to remove him from his hospital, although he was its chief glory, because he had brought still another lady into it recently in order to avoid still another child that was said to be his own.

"Of course I know him," Carlotta said jubilantly. "He's an old friend of David's. And an old beau of mine. He's Scorpio—you know what *that* means! He used to take me out to dinner now and then when you were working on the D.P.s, dear. Though if I'd had any idea he was so fertile I would never even have let him get that close to me. I wonder what it is out here that makes the men so dangerous. It must be something in the water." It did no harm to let them think that she could have a child if she wished. Only David knew better.

After a leisurely lunch they went for a drive through the countryside, so that her guests might see some of the beauties of Eastern Long Island, but she was still talking about this surgeon when they arrived at the estate of Carlton Miles. There was a long drive through green woodland before they reached a cluster of white houses on the banks of an inlet of the sea, but she filled up the interval with tales of the surgeon's professional skill and personal perfidy, which seemed to be about equal. She

noticed, with relief, that David did not seem to object to her stories, and even laughed once or twice, though ordinarily he disliked gossip.

Their hostess, a tall lady in a flowery dress of rather old-fashioned design, came towards them with a gentle smile and a Virginia accent. "Now I want everything to go right on as if nothing had happened," she said after the gentlemen had been presented to her. At almost exactly the same moment the Whitlocks drove up. She was particularly friendly to Cyrilla. "I've been meaning to write you about that poem of yours in the magazine, my dear. I understood it, I really did!"

"Have you heard the news about Dick Rawley?" Carlotta asked her, and began to re-tell the surgeon's story, conferring heroic capacities for mass-insemination upon him, as she and Mrs. Miles led the way on to a large porch where several people had already gathered. She noticed that the faces of these people lacked some of the gaiety that usually prevailed at the cocktail hour, but she paid little attention to this.

Carlton Miles, a large man with a florid complexion and leghorn-white hair, wearing a wildflower in his lapel, came forward and kissed Carlotta and Cyrilla on the cheek, and pressed David's hand warmly and told him how glad he was to see him again. But the welcome, though cordial, did not last long. There was an anxious expression on their host's face. "We're going right on as if nothing had happened," he said.

"I was just telling Dolly the news about Dick Rawley," said Carlotta mischievously, while he brought forward his guest of honour, the Congressman who might make so much trouble for Greco. The Congressman, as she had observed before, had shoe-button black eyes, with an expression both persecuted and cruel.

"May I present Mr. Dickson? Mrs. Holderness." said Carlton Miles, with his hand on the Congressman's arm.

She noticed that David looked at the inquisitorial Mr. Dickson with the particularly keen attention that he showed when he encountered abnormality.

"Oh, I know Mr. Dickson. We met in Washington, didn't we? But you've come to a very dangerous place, Mr. Dickson," she said in the gay tone that she had brought from the Club.

"Yes?" said the Congressman, who looked somewhat out of place in these surroundings—somewhat like a small-town prosecutor pleading a case before a higher court. Once again she watched David watch him while she went on, "Yes, it seems that the water here is different from the water anywhere else. It comes to us, you know, from rivers that flow under the Sound from New England."

"Really?" It seemed a shame to her that such a dull man could terrify Greco, but on the other hand Greco was always saying how much he believed in the people, and this was one of their elected representatives.

"Yes, and it seems to suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange. That's the only way I can explain all the stories I hear."

"And this is Mrs. Dickson. Mrs. Holderness." Dolly Miles interrupted quickly, seeming to fear that Carlotta's humour, which was known for its naughtiness, might scandalise the representative of the people.

"How do you do?" said a well-groomed lady with considerably more social grace than her husband. She kept an anxious editorial eye on him.

"How do you do?" Carlotta reflected affectionately that David had never feared her naughtiness, but on the contrary considered it a sign of vitality and laughed at her jokes. She squeezed his arm.

A weary-eyed elderly man in a black suit appeared at Mr. Dickson's elbow. "Washington's on the wire, sir."

"Oh good, we've got 'em. Excuse me, please." The Congressman bowed and left with the butler, while

Carlotta reflected that he was wearing better-made clothes than the last time she had seen him.

"You must forgive my husband, Mrs. Holderness. He wants to find out exactly what has happened. He's afraid we'll have to return to Washington at once. They say the President's flying back from Missouri. We liked you so much in *His French Wife*, and the movie was such a disappointment after your performance!"

"Why, thank you! That's very kind of you to say that. As a matter of fact, I'm going to play that part again."

"Really?" said Dolly Miles. "When?"

"This summer."

"But I thought that——"

"Yes, dear, but she won't be able to. She almost broke her jaw last night. And unless she gets a *very* good plastic job, she's probably all washed up."

"What a shame! What happened?"

"Yes, it is terrible." Carlotta looked genuinely dismayed.

"What happened?"

Greco came up at that moment, and demanded of Dolly Miles, "Where's your radio? I want to hear it myself!"

"Oh, no! No radio! Not today!" said Carlotta firmly, and gave him a warning look, which meant, "Relax when you're with these people. That's the best way to make a good impression on them. They like *humour*."

He turned away from her, frowning. "Where's the radio, please? I just can't believe it!"

"Now, Greco! I want you to listen to what Mrs. Dickson was just saying about my performance in *His French Wife*. And lots of other people thought the same thing!"

"I'm not interested in the theatre just now. I can believe that the corrupt régime of Syngman Rhee would do it, but not the North Koreans."

"I'm sorry," said Carlton Miles, "but the North Koreans did do it."



"I don't believe it!" She had never seen him so tactless, at least not since the '30s.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, no politics today. Please!"

"I'm afraid you're going to have to put up with some politics today, Carlotta," said Carlton Miles.

"Never! I went through the whole War without giving them a thought, and I've never regretted it. Once I got interested in them, and only made a fool of myself. I don't know what it is that you're shouting about, but you're all wrong. It isn't worth it!"

"Oh, it isn't, eh?" said Carlton Miles. "I don't know anything about it, but my guess is that we'll be at war in a matter of days."

"But I don't pay any attention to wars. My husband does, and look what's happened to him!" She pointed to David.

"What *did* happen to you, David?" asked Dolly Miles. "We have been so excited that I didn't have a chance to ask. Please forgive me."

"Where's the radio?" asked Greco.

"Yes, I'd like to listen to it, too," said Cyril Whitlock. "A real shooting war—that's something one can't ignore. I admire your attitude," he said to Carlotta, "I really do, but I'm afraid it's beyond me."

"Oh, well, I suppose we'll have to go back and listen to it all over again," said Carlton Miles, leading the way indoors. "There really aren't very many hard facts yet."

"What did I tell you?" said Greco. "When it's all straightened out, you'll find that it was the South Koreans who attacked, not the North Koreans."

"I really don't think so," said Carlton Miles, somewhat more suavely than the last time he had spoken to him.

All of the party went indoors to listen to the radio, except Carlotta. She was left on the terrace, with a cloud on her forehead.

"Aren't you coming, dear?" asked David of her.

"No," she said firmly, "and if you really love me, you'll stay with me."

"Why, of course, dear," said David, almost before the words were out of her mouth, although he had been moving towards the door. Once again he was being considerate of her bad nerves, but this time she resented his cool detachment and his ready love.

"You've been horrible to me all day," she complained. "That's why I feel so bad."

"Yes, dear?" There was no catching him off guard; he adjusted himself immediately to her mood; and his quickness only annoyed her.

"Horrible!"

"Yes, dear." David walked up to her and put his arm about her shoulders and gave her a hug. "You look beautiful," he said, "and you were very amusing all through lunch. I haven't had such a good laugh in a long time."

"You're terribly superior to all this, aren't you?" The hug, unexpectedly, had made her feel better, but she could not resist a desire to attack him, once more at least.

"Superior? No, bewildered. It's so unexpected. We had warnings, but I never realised——"

When he confessed a mistake or an oversight she always liked him better. Now her love for him returned quickly. "How do you feel?" she asked, pressing close to him. "I feel terrible."

"I feel frightened about Pete. If there's a war he'll probably have to go."

"Peter! Of course! That's why I feel so bad. Let's go in and listen!" She took his arm affectionately and hurried indoors.

## XIII

## BLACK BATTLE RIBBON

CYRILLA felt estranged from the other guests, but no more than ordinarily so. She had long since got used to being unable to mix freely either with her fellow-students at college or with the older people whom she met through her parents. Her mother was fond of taking her along with her on week-ends, and she submitted to this because most of her social life was passive and, to her, unimportant. In whatever house she went there were always one or two good books that she hadn't read. She also felt estranged from her mother and was afraid of understanding her too well. She listened to the suggestions that her father made from time to time about her mother, but always she brushed them aside later. There really was no point in going into all that. Soon enough she would leave home for ever—either by going to California and entering the Vedanta convent that seemed at times the only solution to her problems, or by going abroad and living in Paris.

But she did not feel estranged from Dr. Holderness, and she wanted very much to talk to him. The few words he had uttered in her presence, though they had been exceptionally evasive, had meant still more to her than his book. During their trip to Southampton she had questioned her father about him so exhaustively that her mother had protested again and again that he wasn't worthy of so much interest. But she disagreed, and so did her father, and every new chip of information that she gathered from him went at once into a mosaic that was forming in her mind.

It was as a teacher that Dr. Holderness interested her most, as a possible successor to her father. She had had so

far, she knew, one of the best educations obtainable, but it had been almost entirely literary. It wasn't enough to agree on Sir Thomas Malory and Hart Crane. She had differed with her father on the fundamental issue of Catholicism because neither he nor it seemed spiritual enough. She wanted a faith that completely won and held her respect, and she also wanted the same of a teacher. "I'm willing to make any sacrifice," she liked to believe, "if only I find that." She thought—and it was the first time in her life she had ever thought it—that Dr. Holderness might be *that* kind of teacher and might show the way to *that* kind of faith.

She knew very well that if she had been a more normal girl she would not have bothered her head with such absurdities. She would have been content to drink one or two cocktails while setting her sights for a husband or a lover. As it was, she poured the alcoholic equivalent of six cocktails into a handsome glass, and studied shyly a man who might prove to be entirely imaginary and certainly was entirely unobtainable.

Why had he ever come back to his wife? That was the principal question that emerged from the mosaic, and the only answer that accompanied it was ridiculous. Because she, like the anonymous German who had blinded his left eye, injured him! Had he reached the state in his life where he *wanted* injuries, as an aid to greater self-transcendence? Had he passed, as Cyrilla's father suggested, from extreme wilfulness to an extreme quest of God? A religious drive, quite possibly much more irrational than he knew, seemed at work in him, and it might conceivably have led him 'out into the world' during the war years, into adventure, into prison, and finally into major wounds. Some of the foremost shapers of mankind had been possessed by this rare master-passion, but it was uncommon in a scientist.

Cyrilla had only to contrast him with her Uncle Dick,

who was also a psychologist, to see how unorthodox his life pattern had been. He had not been content, like her uncle, to teach in a university. Nor had he been content, like thousands of city psychiatrists, to persuade patients, for a comfortable fee, to adapt themselves to city life. On the contrary, he had announced his intention of moving part of his laboratory away from the city and trying to develop a country-bred wisdom, in those who could sustain it, that might serve as an armament against modernity. It had to be said for him that at least he thought on a grand scale. Some readers might mistakenly think he advocated a new fascism, but what he had in mind, as his book made clear, was a healthy and necessary development of democracy. He had declared war on the interior impoverishment of modern life. And his motivation might be self-transcendence. He had written in his book that scientists "enjoy too much unearned prestige. They are a kind of royalty. Since their predecessors and their situation have conferred upon them a distinction that they rarely merit, they decay as habitually as kings. It is well known that outside their specialities they are quite unimpressive." Had this been a description of the dangers he had apprehended in the honours paid himself? He was so dedicated to a life of pure idea that he must be very scornful of any slackening within himself. Was he the kind of man who would rather die than live self-indulgently?

She hoped so because she resented, and resented deeply, the well-cushioned safety of his life. As a gifted scientist, with wealthy foundations and institutions ready to support his endeavours, he enjoyed a protected position in society that would never be given her or any other poet. Even his failures would not be held against him. He would never get bad notices. He was solid. His work was sacred. Our whole society had been built upon respect for his kind of man.

She believed that his injuries represented a striving

towards spirituality on the part of one who otherwise had conducted his career with an eminent practicality. The patch that he wore on his eye was a battle ribbon, to distinguish him from more prudent scientists. And in the newspaper interview that had been enclosed within the copy of his book he had spoken prophetically and, it now seemed, expectantly of the day when the scientist would be a pariah. Quite possibly an appetite for martyrdom had not been satisfied, and he yearned secretly for the public rejection that history seemed to have meted out to all truly disinterested men.

It was the only way she could explain to herself his willingness to come home and reunite himself with so artificial a woman as his wife. But to theorise about him was unsatisfactory, and since there appeared to be no hope of disengaging him from his wife, Cyrilla did the next best thing. She put an arm in Pete's and asked him to walk her around the grounds.

"I thought you were mad at me," he said with some surprise.

"No! I want to see this place. You know, I've never been here before. Mrs. Miles is my godmother, but that doesn't mean anything. I've got eight of them. Mummy thought that would mean at least eight good big presents every birthday, and maybe a legacy or two."

"I didn't know you could have more than one."

"Oh yes! Only one godfather, but as many godmothers as you like. But Mummy has quarrelled with nearly all of them since, so I don't get anything. Well, that isn't exactly true. Mrs. Miles is one that writes now and then, and sometimes sends a cheque. I got a beautiful Baudelaire with the last one."

"This place used to belong to my grandfather," Pete said rather hesitantly.

"I know," she said at once to spare him embarrassment. "It's turn-of-the-century, isn't it? I like that period—so

spacious, so hopeful. And getting ready for one of the best periods of poetry we ever had." They came to the edge of the water, which reflected the cheerfulness of a deep-blue sky. "It must be much more beautiful here in the autumn, when everything is dying. Then you could forget all this prosperity, which gets me down. I'd hate to die in a place like this, it's too well cared for. I want the night to darken round me and the wild winds coldly blow. I want clouds beyond clouds above me— You're not nearly as talkative as you were yesterday. Of course if you don't want to—"

"I suppose I ought to enlist."

"I thought you were planning on a diplomatic career."

"They probably wouldn't let me go through with that now."

"Find out first. Don't just rush in. You'd be more useful as a diplomat than as a soldier anyway." She found herself unexpectedly worried about him, eager to protect him from his own martial instincts.

"You think so?"

"Daddy says there's a big shortage of good diplomats. And he's travelled a lot. But of course you'll *want* to get shot at. You'll be ashamed unless you do."

"Well, it is an experience that I wouldn't want to miss."

"Experience!" She was annoyed with such feeble reasoning. "If you want experience, you ought to stay close to your father. If I had a father like that—!"

"It seems to me your father is—"

"Yes, but he's not like yours! Daddy's wonderful, and I'll never love anyone the way I love him, but your father is—well, Daddy himself thinks he's one of the most extraordinary men he ever met. You know, I almost met him when I was abroad."

"You did?"

"And I almost met the woman he was living with. You know about her, don't you?"

"The woman he was—"

"I wonder how much you do know about him? Well, it won't hurt you." She threw her glass of whisky, which was almost empty, into a bush, and took his arm again. There was a sound of breakage.

He looked horrified by her gesture. "That's old crystal. And probably an heirloom."

"They shouldn't use it at parties, then. Does the drinker exist for the glass or the glass exist for the drinker? The glass exists for the drinker." She shook back her dull black hair. "You've got quite a father, quite a father. Did it ever occur to you that all our real progress comes from original insight? Your father is one of those few men who push ahead into the darkness that is all around us and——"

"Who was the woman? I never heard of her."

"Daddy saw a lot of them two years ago, when he was over there."

"Who is she?"

"If I'd come a week earlier I'd have met her too. She went over to London just when I was about to go to Paris. I heard her concert, but I had no idea Daddy knew her."

"Who is she? Have I ever heard of her?"

"Have you ever heard of Marthe Viardot? They've just issued her recording of the *Songs of the Auvergne*. It's much better than any other."

"I think so."

"Now I understand why she picked out your father. And when you think of all the men she had to choose from! I used to hear about her when I was taking some courses at the Sorbonne."

"She's a singer?"

"I'll send you a picture of her. Such eyes—like Dusc's. You poor thing!" She looked at him with maternal sympathy. "Being so close to a great passion like that, and not knowing anything about it!" She kissed him on the cheek, leaving a lipstick smear.

He stopped short, and put his hand on her shoulder.



She backed away at once. "No! All these years I've waited. I didn't know what I wanted. What I needed." Her face was illuminated by an idea. "This is a new kind of *Phèdre*. *Phèdre* doesn't want the son. She wants the father. Not Hippolyte, but Thésée!" And then she wished she hadn't said it. Not only because it might hurt him but because of the unexpected confession it had made.

He looked at her as if not wishing to understand her. "Do you like the Greeks too?" he asked falteringly. "I took a course. I see everything that way now. My own life, for example, comes right out of the *Odyssey*. I'm Telemachus, of course, my father is Odysseus, my mother's Penelope, and all these people around her are the—"

"Your mother Penelope? What's like Penelope about her? She isn't patient, and she isn't even—oh well, oh well. Let's go back to the house and see Odysseus. That's not bad. He's really wise and he's really lived. But why did he leave Viardot to come back here? You know, your father's a very mysterious man. I thought I was beginning to understand him, but now I see I don't know anything at all. Daddy said he seemed so happy in Paris. Unless it means that he couldn't stand his happiness, that he wanted— Let's go back to the house!"

The most important thing in life, she thought as they climbed a slight rise that led to a flagstone terrace where laughter was coming back into fleshy faces and crystal sparkled in the slow reign of summer sunlight, the most important thing was to remember at all times that the Godhead—or, as the Hindus called it, the Atman—dwelt in everyone. This was the discipline that made even the most painful contact with humanity—the conducted tour of prison or mad-house, the ride on the subway, the lunch with rich relatives—a meaningful event and a possible triumph. To see It everywhere. It was easy to see It in Pete or his father: they were so beautiful. But to see It in Pete's mother, in a woman so irresponsibly destructive

(who had moreover the *mores* on her side and could, with a clever, worldly tongue, so easily make oneself ridiculous): that was difficult. But it must be done. *It* must be seen *everywhere*. Then peace came suddenly, and with it love, and one no longer had to look ahead to the year's death to be happy, or long for the rustling snow that would fall on one's early grave; one could be happy here and now, even in the euphoria of summer sunlight and while walking towards one's family and one's friends.

## XIV

### I DON'T LIKE A TFASIR

GILLHAM's first thought when he heard the news was, 'Will they draft me again?' In 1842 and 1843 he had spent more than a year and a half in a private's uniform, and he had been able to take it off only because a former employee of his happened to be in charge of a government agency and arranged to have him transferred to civilian war work. The Army had let him go because of the new draft regulations that permitted the departure of men from thirty-eight to forty-five. He was forty-four when he got out, and he returned immediately to his apartment on Fifth Avenue and called an elevator operator and directed him to burn the uniform. The rest of the War he spent in a government office in the Grand Central district which gave him a glass-enclosed cubicle of his own, a secretary, and required him to spend about two hours a day dictating official letters about strategic materials. The rest of the time he was free to devote to his own affairs, and he earned more than \$300,000 by helping to underwrite certain stock issues in association with certain Wall Street firms with

which he was friendly. His own firm was temporarily inactive.

As early as he noticed that some producers of strategic materials, already sure of victory, were arranging a cutback in their production, to avoid low post-war prices, and so he did not feel too unpatriotic about his own activities. On the contrary, he believed that victory in the War had been possible only because our side had had the cooperation of such producers and of such men as himself. Unless natural leaders, he argued, had been given an incentive, the war effort would never have succeeded. He believed that he belonged to an indispensable *élite*, and that the wheels of industry would never turn effectively without men of his kind. Moreover, the decisive factor in the War had been American industry. Therefore it was absurd to go by appearances and imagine that he had not made a proper contribution. On the contrary, he believed that he had done as much as, say, a major-general. But of course he was careful to express such ideas to one or two friends at most. They were too apt to be misunderstood.

As soon as he had time to think, of course he realised that he would never be drafted again. At fifty-one he was safe. He could enjoy life unmolested, except by tax-gatherers and other agents of a singularly maladroit administration.

But there was another aspect of the situation, and this would require most careful thought. If there was going to be a war, it would certainly affect business. This was no time, therefore, to go on with a week-end. It was a time to get away from people and think things out for himself. Even in ordinary periods he arranged to spend at least two hours a day merely looking out of his window, doing nothing, and to this habit he attributed the fact that he had his health and his money. Clarity came solely through the avoidance of details. He paid men well to look after details for him. He wished to see only the main outlines, while

watching ocean liners from the fortieth floor. That was the way to get ahead and stay ahead. There was always room at the top, but only for those who knew how to take it easy.

He slipped away from the party and went to the telephone and called the local airport. "I want a plane to get me to the City. I don't want anyone in it except myself and the pilot. I'll charter the whole plane. O.K.? I'll be there in twenty minutes. Start tuning her up."

His plan was clear. He would drive his yellow Cadillac to the airport and either have it driven for him to the City or come back next week-end and get it himself. Preferably the former. He didn't want more than a bare minimum of details to think about. Now was a time when he wanted his life to be as streamlined as possible, the way it was in a Franciscan monastery he had visited once in California. Very smart, those monks, they knew how to keep things down to essentials. And now was a time when streamlining might make all the difference between a lot of money made and a lot of money lost.

As he was getting up from the telephone he saw Carlotta, before she saw him. He wasn't entirely sorry to be leaving her. She was funny, and she had given him some good laughs at lunch, but it was becoming clearer and clearer that he would never get anywhere with her. She wanted him, she said, as a 'friend', and he wasn't interested in that. He had been working up an appetite for her for some time, and with a skill that he sincerely admired she had always held him off. "That part of my life is over," she had said; "I'm only interested in the theatre now. You wouldn't understand." She had been teasing him, and he didn't like a teaser. She wouldn't get any more tips on the market from him.

But her husband—that was another proposition. Gillham would have liked to talk to him. There were lots of questions that he felt he could ask such a man with safety. First of all, should he have a hernia operation or not? His

physician said he was not too old for it, but he had never permitted them to cut him except when he had appendicitis, and then it was an emergency and an experience that he didn't want to repeat. Not nearly as simple as they had said it would be. But his hernia was giving him trouble, and a truss was a nuisance. He didn't feel like wearing it when he went out with a woman, and yesterday he had not worn it when he went swimming, and afterwards he felt weak. Dr. Holderness was the sort of man you could trust. He had a big reputation. Any advice he gave could be taken seriously.

He could give advice on other things too. Obviously he had the kind of brains that deserved to be bought. Gillham had been feeling lately that he wanted to get married, and he knew enough to know that was crazy, because he had been all through it and he was still paying for it. Maybe if he sat down with Dr. Holderness and just talked the whole thing out, its ridiculousness would become so apparent that he wouldn't have to do anything more and his spells of loneliness would pass. It was a good thing that Dr. Holderness had come back, he would call him up some day and make an appointment with him. He didn't practise of course, but he might be prevailed upon to make an exception in this case. Especially if the fee was big enough. The funny thing was that the person Gillham had been thinking of marrying was Carlotta, and now he wanted her own husband's help in showing him how foolish it would be!

She saw him when he got up from the telephone.

"I'm so glad you're here," he said. "I was just going to hunt you up. I must be getting back to the City at once."

Carlotta was on her way to the Miles library when she caught sight of Gillham, getting up from the telephone. She had just had a distressing experience and she wanted to be alone for a moment. She knew that there was a copy

of *His French Wife* in the library, with pictures of herself in it, and she felt that if she looked at it her nerves might get better. It might help her to believe that her existence had been justified and she hadn't made some fundamental mistake. She needed reassurance badly, unexpectedly.

Nancy's daughter Cyrilla—what a ridiculous name! so much like vanilla!—had come back from a walk with Peter, hanging on his arm unpossessively but tenderly, and started to talk to David. That was all that had happened. But it had been enough. The girl, looking quite beautiful when her unglossy hair was brushed and she wore a clean yellow frock, had managed to do to her what the war news and the defections it caused among her admirers had failed to do.

Cyrilla had said to David, "You know, I almost met you in Paris. Two years ago."

And David immediately became interested, in a way that he hadn't been all afternoon. "You did? *Two* years ago? Oh, yes, I saw your father then!"

"I'm so sorry I didn't leave London sooner. I stayed there to hear a certain concert. And then when I got to Paris, Daddy had gone on to Rome, and so I missed you."

"Your father did nothing but talk about you. You had just written a poem. 'This means,' he said, 'she's really talented. I haven't been wasting my time.'"

"Poor Daddy!" She glanced at Cyril, chatting twenty feet away. "I wonder if he has?"

"I don't think so. I read it, and I liked it too."

"You didn't!"

"Yes, you're the real thing. Even I could see that."

"Oh, I wish I'd met you in Paris. I'd have liked so much to meet you—and your friends."

Carlotta could have sworn that she was about to say 'friend' and then changed it to the plural. Could the girl know about Viardot? Of course! She must have heard of her from Cyril, who had discussed her with Carlotta more

than once. "She's wonderful, my dear, but don't worry about her, he'll come back to you," was the gist of what Cyril had repeatedly assured her. It was part of his educational programme to treat his daughter as if she were an adult, and so undoubtedly he had not kept such a secret from her. Besides, he enjoyed gossip as much as anyone else. David would have said nothing, but not Cyril!

And Peter had acted as if he too had heard about the 'friend' of his father's. That was just too much!

Viardot had been getting more and more publicity in America lately, and she really was very good. Carlotta had gone to a gramophone shop and listened to some of her records, as soon as she had first heard of her relationship with David, but she had never brought any of them into the house. It was her excellence, more than the mere covert mention of her, that upset Carlotta now. The beauty with which she sang the ancient Shepherd's Song in Auvergnat dialect had made Carlotta wish that she had never left France, that above all she had never gone on the stage, that she had never permitted herself to be rebuilt by Broadway to such an extent that a simple thing like that song seemed remote to her. There had been a time when that kind of music had been part of her. And now it seemed so far away that she could no longer stay with David and keep an eye on the girl because her own eyes were filling with tears and she feared that everything she had done had been a mistake.

"I'm an artist too," she murmured to herself under her breath, more than once, as she went towards the library. And then she met Gillham, and a mere glimpse of him made her feel again that she had been guilty of some dreadful miscalculation. The kind of person drawn to David was Cyrilla or Viardot, the kind of person drawn to her was Gillham or Cyrilla's mother. Among her suitors Greco stood out as one of the best she had ever had, and how narrow, how misguided, how *shrewd* he seemed next to the

purity and the passion of the Shepherd's Song—or, for that matter, of Cyrilla. Not only she herself, Carlotta feared, but all those around her had suffered some horrid blight which David and Peter, however, had escaped. She resented David's escape. And Peter's too, though he was her own son. Both of them seemed to reproach her, even when they were as affectionate to her as they were now. No wonder she had trouble giving Peter money. He never gave her respect, did he? Only when he felt like it.

But Gillham! And he had been a guest in her home! She felt deeply ashamed that she had ever taken any money from him. He seemed particularly monstrous when he put on his semi-English accent and said, "I *must* be getting back to the City at once. If you don't mind I'll just leave my things at your place." The semi-English accent meant that his self-possession had returned. He could not have appeared more withdrawn if he had been sitting behind his desk in his office and looking at his mail.

"You're going?" she said, and for some reason she felt it necessary to plead with him to stay, though he had never interested her and now disgusted her.

"Yes, I've just telephoned the airport and chartered a plane." He put his hand impudently on her shoulder.

"But why? Don't go. We're going back to my place for a cold supper."

"I'm so sorry, but I simply must get back to the City at once."

"But there's so much traffic on Sunday. Why not wait until tomorrow morning?"

He smiled indulgently, his hand patting her bare arm. "There won't be any traffic for me. I'm going by air." She had noticed before how readily men could turn modern conveniences into a source of self-congratulation.

"Oh." At last she understood. "I'm so sorry," she said, as if she meant it. "What will you do with your car?" She was still leaning over backwards to be solicitous about his



every want. When despair overtook her she became extremely polite.

"Leave it at the airport." He was looking at her greedily.

"No, no, Peter will take you there, and then he can put it in our garage."

"Well, thanks, that's very nice of you," he said with somewhat of a descent into American. And then one of his well-manicured little hands grabbed her left breast, while he tried with the other to bend her head towards his. She wrestled with him furiously, but while she was in the midst of her self-defence someone came into the hallway and it was Dolly Miles, who looked astonished.

"Oh, hello," she said with some embarrassment. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I was just telephoning to charter a plane, Mrs. Miles," Gillham said suavely. His semi-English accent came back while he spoke. "I must return to the City at once. This war news may have a serious effect upon my business. Carlotta was kind enough to show me how to get the airport."

"Isn't it too bad?" said Carlotta. "Mr. Gillham has to leave us." And she felt sure that she was blushing. Later she discovered that the rear part of her skirt had been raised several inches while she wrestled.

## XV

### PRISONER OF HOPE

WHILE talking to her husband and experiencing the first pleasure he had known all day, Greco saw Carlotta reappear from the house and advance towards them with a

troubled expression on her face. He didn't want to talk to her. He was annoyed with her.

Of course she couldn't be blamed for the longest wild-goose chase of his life. Six thousand miles in all it would be, to say how do you do to a Congressman whom he despised. Glad to meet you: 'I'm off to Washington! Zachary would think he was losing his luck, and that could be serious. She couldn't be blamed either for the other people. They all went with her way of living. She was trying to get along in a very tough racket, and now and then she had to raise money. When you had useful contacts you couldn't afford to break with them. Merely making them sometimes meant that you had to go on being nice to them for the rest of your life.

She couldn't be blamed either for making a fool of him last night. She had led him on for years, and she had got away with it. It was his own damn fault.

But he was annoyed with her, and on a matter of principle. What she had been saying last night was really, "You're still the prisoner of a hope that smarter minds have seen through long ago. Neither communism nor socialism will work out any better than capitalism. Perhaps even worse. The world is headed for nothing but a series of catastrophes. Haven't you caught on yet?" That's what it had amounted to, he had heard it before, many times, and he couldn't swallow it. That kind of negativism created an atmosphere that his lungs couldn't breathe. When he lost his hope of changing the world he lost everything that gave him an incentive to go on living. The prospect of getting old was terrifying enough. If he couldn't foresee a world visibly the better for his efforts—Jew and Gentile reconciled; white and black working together in harmony; armaments at a minimum; atom bombs outlawed and *unthinkable*—he got awfully down in the mouth.

When he made a picture that showed a humane solution

to racial antagonisms he felt the way he used to feel: young, vigorous, conquering. When he made a picture like the one he was going to start work on next week, the one about Charleston, with an atmosphere of decay and futility and sex mania, all he could do then would be to make it as perversely sensational as possible, build a friendly poker game into a nightmare, have the audience shrink from the horrors of the beautiful old houses around the Battery, lick their chops over a rape, and so forth. And while he was doing it, he would feel terrible, even though it had literary value. All it would use was his talent, and that would be exploited. Why did he let it happen to him? Not because he needed the money any longer but because he had to keep his hand in—and his name before the public. He was no better off than Carlotta.

Dr. Holderness would understand all this if there were time to talk to him at any length. Greco was glad that he had gone over to him, at the other side of the terrace, as soon as Carlotta left, and struck up a conversation. With him were his son and the strange young girl who came from Bennington. The doctor and Greco disagreed fundamentally about the theatre, but at least their disagreement was stimulating. And it took Greco's mind off the distorted news from Korea.

"I've gone to a great many plays," Dr. Holderness had been saying, in answer to a suggestion that perhaps he was not much interested in the theatre, "and the drama is the literary form that happens to mean most to me."

"But I understand that you don't think it advisable for a person to make a career in the theatre," said Greco.

"Why is that?" the girl from Bennington asked.

"Oh, I only said that to a particular person, and I'm not sure I'd say it now. And I only meant the New York theatre. I've seen other places where the theatre offers a very good career."

"Why do you feel that way about New York?" Greco

asked. "I remember you said something in that book of yours which gave me the impression that you didn't think much of New York as a place to live in either."

"Oh, I was only writing about a very unusual kind of person who has got fed up with being a guinea-pig in a blind social experiment. Obviously lots of other people do live in New York and have to live there. But there are a few who really shouldn't."

"And you took it upon yourself to warn them?"

"Well, it was an old-fashioned personal essay, not a scientific work, and so I thought I could get away with saying what I felt."

"But if the social experiment is blind, Father," the son asked, "why should I go into it?" His large eyes and regular features made him good-looking enough to be a juvenile, and he was as big as a lifeguard, but he seemed to suffer from a crippling sensitiveness.

"Because you can't afford to take my word for it." Dr. Holderness put his arm affectionately on his son's shoulder, while Greco thought enviously, 'After all the work I've done, and all the write-ups I've had, no two kids have ever given me that kind of interest. In the theatre, they come around and they make a fuss, but there's always something phony about it. They want something.'

"But if I already know that it's blind? And stupid and meaningless and—?"

"You will have to find out through experience," the doctor said unmercifully.

"If you feel as you do about New York, why have you come back to it?" the Bennington girl asked.

"All my travels were only for perspective. My job is here."

"But you're going to move your laboratory to the country?"

"Oh, just one part of the work, which happens to be a hobby of mine. The main work will stay in New York.

The country project is to see if we can help a few people to be able to hold their own with the way things are going. You might call it an experiment in social psychiatry. It probably won't work, but I think it's worth trying."

"Sounds like another Brook Farm. We tried it in the People's Theatre," said Greco. "It didn't work, but my God, I miss it! I felt like a different person then." It was at that moment that he caught sight of Carlotta and wished that she were not coming towards them.

"I suppose there's something in the American air," the doctor smiled, "that makes that kind of experiment inevitable—and that kind of failure. We've had so many of them. I can see why they seem so ridiculous to those who don't try them. Yet here I am, past forty, and not the man I used to be, and about to try another." He greeted his wife. "Come in, dear, and tell us what you think. We were just saying——"

"I'm afraid I must be leaving," Greco told Carlotta sternly, before she could speak. "Good-bye, Doctor, and good luck with your project. I hope you'll be the first to make one of them work." It was a pleasure to participate for a moment in a hopeful idea, even if he did not know what it was about.

"Don't go!" Carlotta protested. "You'd only drive bumper-to-bumper all the way."

"So what? It's a rented car." She made him *want* to speak coarsely.

"That reminds me," she said. "Peter, will you drive Mr. Gillham to the airport in his car? There he is now. He's going back to the City by air." Her son didn't seem particularly eager to help the Wall Street man, but finally went away with him, after good-byes and thank-yous had been said all around. Meanwhile Greco was arranging to take his own departure and listening to scraps of information which had come over the radio. All of them said that

the North Koreans *had* attacked, and that made him feel worse and worse. The whole trip had been a terrible mistake. Not only had his time been wasted, it looked as if he were going to be confronted with a situation no less painful than that created when the Soviet had made its pact with the Nazis in August 1839. Also, his host had been looking at him suspiciously, and making certain remarks that suggested that he did not believe Greco's testimony before the Congressional Committee had been 'on the level'. He actually used that phrase in some ambiguous sentence, and he was the publisher of several newspapers, and could cause trouble.

There was a volume of short stories with a title that summed up the way Greco felt: *Winner Take Nothing*. That was it, exactly.

He was glad that, borrowing the idea from the shrewd Wall Street operator, he had stopped at the Holderness house after lunch and got his bag and his car. This way he could go straight to the City without further delay, meanwhile listening to the news on the radio and making up his mind on what stand he would take on it if the North Koreans really had attacked. Maybe it would turn out that they had good reason to attack. On second thought he had better wait until he had read *all* about it, before he made up his mind. By the time he got to the City, the *Worker* would probably be on the streets. He could buy it down on 8th Street, where no one would know him. He'd like to see what they said. You never got their side of the story anywhere else. And they had helped him to see why the Nazi pact had been very sound policy, back in

He didn't want anything further to do with the Party, which had disillusioned him bitterly. He hadn't minded leaving them at all, but his Marxist education had been invaluable.

Carlotta and her husband walked with him to his car, to say good-bye. She seemed upset that he was leaving.

"This war has ruined the day," she complained. "Nancy has to go back to the City too. She says everybody will rush to buy cars now, and she needs a new truck or she won't be able to handle all her business. There'll be nobody to eat supper."

Greco wrote his telephone number on a slip of paper and gave it to the doctor, because it wasn't in the book. "I'll be back in New York in the fall. Why don't you give me a ring? We could go for walks." He hadn't extended such an invitation in years. It was an unexpected and involuntary tribute to a man who seemed capable of sacrificing himself to his convictions.

But he said no more than a straight good-bye and a straight thank-you to Carlotta, although he knew she was waiting for him to make some reference to the Stendhal movie. And he didn't look directly at her while he spoke to her. He never could do that when he was annoyed.

## XVI

### THE VAGINOLATER

THE week-end had not been much fun for Nancy. Once again with her extraordinary cunning Carlotta had got something out of her and not given anything in return. Meanwhile she had looked riper, more enticing than ever. No one knew more about dramatising each movement of the hands or the feet or the head or the shoulders, to give them the greatest possible subtlety. And there was a melancholy, a loneliness, beneath her gaiety that made one long to bring real happiness to her. In her quest of success she had so severely Americanised herself, stripped herself bare of every European trait except those that would get a laugh, that there was something deeply touching about

her: a woman without a country. Next to Garbo, who had done something similar, she was more attractive than any person alive.

The news from Korea had returned Nancy's thoughts quickly to her business, and although she had disliked this at first, as an unwelcome intrusion upon her pleasure-making, she realised that it was perhaps just as well. If Carlotta were quite unobtainable—and with the return of her husband her remoteness had increased, although it didn't always work out that way—it would be sensible to forget her and bury one's lost hopes in the many jobs to be done. If there really was going to be another war, the business might be crippled if certain purchases were not made at once.

But it was always so easy for Nancy to turn her thoughts to business, and so hard to find the delight that mere contemplation of Carlotta provided. From her banker father Nancy had inherited a native shrewdness that did not have to be summoned, that came all too readily and wiped out at once her capacity for joy. That was why she had never been able to take seriously her husband's condemnation of her interest in women. He called it 'an abomination' and and flung St. Paul at her. He kept so many images of the Virgin around the house that she, who had come upon the word in a book, had called him a Mariolater, which the dictionary said was a disagreeable way of calling him a worshipper of Mary. He hadn't liked the word and had called her a vaginolater. She hadn't understood it at first, but when he explained it—he had to, because he made it up—she liked it more and more. His pedantry had rebounded against him. "That's exactly what I am. I worship it," she said with satisfaction, while he winced and went upstairs to prepare a lecture on Sir Thomas More, whom he of course called *Saint* Thomas More, a title won, like a posthumous dukedom, by opposing Henry VIII's opposition to Rome.



What she wanted, above everything else, was to escape her shrewdness, to get away from the caution that had been bred into her, in her New England home, by both sides of her family. With Carlotta it would have been so easy for her to become a little child again. When they were alone, and she received some encouragement from Carlotta, she found herself talking like a child, prattling about trifles and whimpering when reproved. That gave her happiness. Her mercenary caution slipped away from her, and she *loved* to give Carlotta expensive presents, in addition to volumes by Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein and Carson McCullers. Above all, she wanted to do anything that was unwise and improvident. Nothing else would satisfy her.

Her vaginolatry, therefore, she believed to be a revolt—a very healthy revolt—against the pinch-penny hatred of life that dominated her background, and still, alas, her instincts. Her appetite for women was a sacred protest, and she herself a priestess of a secret religion. It was much more truly religious than Cyril's Mariolatry.

David Holderness, although she hated him for the peculiar hold he had on Carlotta, would never have been so stupid. Once, years before, they had had a talk, when she had told him what she thought of Cyril's Catholicism and also had told him a little about herself, and he had been amazingly understanding. "You still belong to the anti-puritan generation," he said. "Protest means much to you, because there was so much to protest against. I've often wondered if homosexuality of your kind is not very often a rebellion against mechanisation, a kind of assertion of primordial dignity. In families where there has been much emphasis on social duties nothing else has quite so much of a *mystique*."

She must talk to him again some time. This week-end there had been no chance for it, and anyway she had been too much annoyed with him for reappearing so inopportunistically. Later, perhaps. Like a certain clerk in her employ,

he never thought of himself; she could pour herself out to him for hours. She wanted to find out why she antagonised so many of her friends: that worried her. But now she must gather together her stooge of a husband and her dreamer of a daughter and take them back to the City, while her mind returned effortlessly to its eternal problem, how to make a dollar. Carlotta no longer troubled her, now that business intervened.

Half an hour later, back in her own room and feeling a little better, Carlotta went to Nancy's room. She knew that Nancy was packing her bags and in a hurry to get back to New York, and she also knew that it did not become her to go to Nancy in the rôle of suppliant, but she could not check herself. The minute Nancy seemed oblivious to her she had felt the need to be nice. It had been the same way with Gillham.

"Come in," Nancy said unwelcomingly when she knocked. Carlotta herself had not been more unpleasant when Nancy had slipped into her room on the morning of the day before, *without* knocking. Nancy's ox-blood lips were pursed in a business-like knot, and her heart-shaped figure seemed completely the servant of the matter-of-fact expression in eyes that now were cold and practical. In the car, returning to the Holderness home, she had talked of nothing but the problems which beset the owner of a business in intensely competitive Manhattan. She did not wish to be distracted from the difficulties of making money. It would be necessary therefore to woo her back into the fonder, almost foolish state of mind that had been hers until the radio had broken the peace. Her once odious folly would have to be restored.

"You look beautiful when you're concentrated on a job," Carlotta began, which was the exact opposite of what she believed.

"Oh, I'm not one of those women who never take their

hats off when they're at work. When I'm in the shop I put everything I've got into it," Nancy said absent-mindedly as well as complacently. "I wonder what I did with my bathing-suit."

"Is it outdoors on the line?" Carlotta suggested helpfully. Ordinarily she let her guests and her servants work out all such petty problems without any help from her. This time she had told Ticky she need not bother to help Mrs. Whitlock, she would do it herself.

"Well, if it is, dear, will you send it to me?"

"Of course, darling. Don't give it another thought." Ordinarily at this point Carlotta intimated to her guests with a wan smile that she did not conduct a hotel, if she felt about them as she usually felt about Nancy. Now she continued her campaign to turn Nancy's attention towards herself. "I hope you didn't mind what I said to you yesterday morning."

"What was that, dear?" Nancy asked with a shopkeeper's distractedness, almost as if she were totting up a column of figures instead of folding a pink brassière.

"You haven't forgotten?"

"I'm afraid I have, dear. You know, if we don't get a new truck we might as well kiss that U.N. job good-bye. And that's the biggest order we've ever——"

"When you came into my room. You said you hadn't slept all night, and you just wanted to slip in and be with me."

Nancy crossed the room to get some stockings, stopping to pat Carlotta's cheek patronisingly. "Did I, dear? Well, I meant every word of it, too." There was none of yesterday's tearfulness in her voice. She spoke with the *sang-froid* of an experienced roué. "When you come to town for rehearsals why don't you drop in and see me? We might have dinner together and then go back to my place for a nice long talk."

"That's an idea! I have to go to the City tomorrow

afternoon. What about tomorrow evening?" Carlotta responded eagerly to the chance to flirt with her again. The praise of *any* admirer could be so helpful. And you could always pity the queers.

"Better make it later in the week. I'll be busy tomorrow. This war may have lots of complications." She stopped suddenly. "What were you doing with that awful Mr. Gillham? Necking? Dolly couldn't figure it out at all."

"I wasn't necking with him. I was fighting him off." Carlotta felt her face getting hot.

"You're too experienced with men for that. They don't get started unless they've been led on. No, dear, you'd better think of a better one than that!"

"I tell you I wasn't——"

"Listen, dear, I don't care what you do. Sleep with Mr. Gillham, if you like, though I must confess I don't understand your taste. But just don't get caught at it, dear. That's all I recommend." She seemed maddeningly determined to treat an absurd rumour as an established fact. She also enjoyed, apparently, her own freedom from jealousy.

"Now listen, Nancy——"

"Your skirt was awfully high, dear. Take a tip from me. We all have to have our little fun in bed. Some of us like it one way, some of us like it another. But don't let anyone catch——"

Cyril poked his head in the door. "Are you ready?" he asked Nancy irritably. "Oh, hello," he said, catching sight of Carlotta. "I just wanted to know if the bags are ready to take down. Cyrilla says she doesn't want to come with us. She's going to spend the night here—if that's all right with you, Carlotta."

"It's all right with me," said Carlotta, suddenly weary and heartsick. "We'll be delighted to have her. I only wish you were staying too."

"No, we've got to be off," said Nancy, smiling at her

triumphantly. Never before had she gloated so in Carlotta's presence. Usually she was respectful to the point of adoration, and asked Carlotta solicitously if she were really as sad, as lonely as she seemed. Nobody else sent such wonderful flowers, such tender telegrams on an opening night. Now she was cold, indifferent, and unfathomable—and to add to the mystery, as she went down the stairs towards her car, she said she wanted to say good-bye to dear David and to make a date with him, there was so much she wanted to talk over with him. For Carlotta that was the last straw. One by one each of her suitors had ended by showing more interest in David than in herself. Even Nancy. The last place she would have expected it. She had never encountered such subtle scene-stealing in her entire life. Her own husband was ruining her act.

## XVII

### THE VESTAL

EVENING hopped lightly over precisely scalloped hedges in a village that was a topiary paradise, the south-west wind reduced itself to a discreet sigh, the ocean's roar became a mere heart-beat, church bells floated over sea meadows, and Cyrilla rejoiced that her mother and father had gone, although it probably meant that she would not see her father before his specially blessed plane took off for Rome on Tuesday. Alone in her bedroom with the grave hour that meant most to her, she could disregard the painful prettiness of the prosperous scene that spread out before her, because she had been strengthened by her parents' departure. She was also glad that Pete had not yet

returned from the airport in Mr. Gillham's car, and that Carlotta appeared to be busy downstairs with some discussion with her cook. A glance down the hall of the second floor had informed her that Dr. Holderness was alone, and that there was a chance for her to be alone with him, if only for a minute or two.

She walked fearfully down the hall in his direction. Although the sun had set and his room had darkened, he had not turned on a light. Shirts and underwear and handkerchiefs that he had taken from his valise were being laid in a bureau drawer with a manual patience and orderliness that no doubt had begun in his laboratory. She paused on the threshold of his open door, to look at him, before she knocked.

For her there would always be a red line on her mental calendar between this evening and the evening before. Then she had been once more an unwilling confederate of one of her mother's week-end forays into the surrounding countryside. Now she felt caught up in what might prove to be the greatest adventure she had ever known. She believed she had found the man she had been seeking, the man best fitted to continue the educational rôle of her father. As she looked at him she felt inexpressibly humble, as well as astonished at her boldness. If she had heeded the protests of her wildly protestant heart, she would have run away.

For her there was a more intense concentration of drama in his lean body than she had encountered in any other man. The stories told her of his childhood, of his parentage, of his struggle (the showplace they had just come from, belonging now to Carlton Miles, had once belonged to his father, yet he made no mention of it), of his accomplishments, of his fame, of his life abroad, of his friendship with Marthe Viardot—all these inflamed the interest that had begun when she took up, with an over-sharp critical intelligence, the book he had written for laymen. Seeing

him had impressed her still more than reading him. He was so unassertive and yet so masculine. A lifetime spent in college towns had led her to believe that professional men, the only kind that could deeply interest her, were subject to a blight, a "failure of nerve", as Santayana—or was it Gilbert Murray?—had called it. If a man were to succeed, he had to become a specialist, and the demands of his speciality were so debilitating that in all other respects he was bloodless and repulsive. And *average* too, as Ortega y Gasset had shown so brilliantly. It was not fair sexual weather for a woman who, in spite of the satisfactions that she had been trained to find in literature and thought, remained nonetheless a woman and desired a man to be full-blooded and worthy of her respect. Dr. Holderness seemed alarmingly burnt-out, but perhaps he had also found the secret of self-replenishment.

"May I come in?" she asked shyly, after knocking on the open door.

"Why, yes," he said with a look of surprise.

"It's the first time I've been able to find you alone."

"Sit down." He turned on a light, and somehow gave the impression that he was not entirely unused to this kind of visit.

"Thanks. Please go on with what you were doing," she begged, sitting on the edge of a hand-carved four-poster bed with a dimity canopy.

"It can wait."

"Please!"

"It can wait."

"You know I almost met you in Paris two years ago." She smiled awkwardly.

"Yes, so you were saying." He sat down on a chair. "Of course, your father—" He held out a silver cigarette-box that he took from Carlotta's dressing-table, rising again as he offered it.

"Thanks." She took a cigarette with a trembling hand,

and he held a flame for it. "I wish I had met you then. You could have helped me so much."

"Helped?"

"Saved me so much time."

"Saved you time?"

With yellow fingers she snuffed out her cigarette, although it had been barely lit, and rose, tossing back her hair. Someone had once told her that she looked best at such moments—like a rebellious mermaid. "I need your help." She started to call him "Dr. Holderness" but couldn't.

"What kind of help?"

"I have to make a decision. I had just about decided to go to California and see what the Vedanta movement out there is like. I don't even know if they have gongs in their temples. All I've done until now is read about it. I have to get something I can believe in, something that has a very strict discipline, or I'll go to pieces. I drink—I drink too much. But now I've had an idea. Maybe you could give me a job in your laboratory."

He rose, and his words took on a professional wariness. "What kind of job? What kind of work can you do?"

"Not much."

"But you think you could make yourself useful? How?"

"Not very. Oh, but maybe I could learn something! Ever since I started reading your book I've felt you were the teacher I've been looking for."

"Seems to me you've had just about as good a one as——"

"Oh, but I need something else now. He's taught me something about literature, but—look, I need help. Badly. I throw away crystal glasses. Heirlooms. I'm so—so unripe. Don't throw me out. I've got talent. I really have."

"Of course you have. How old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, going on it."



"That's better. If you want me as your teacher, you'd better start telling the truth."

"I'd *love* to have you as my teacher!"

He crossed to the door. "Something tells me I'd be more pupil than teacher. You said it yourself. You're looking for something you can believe in. A faith. I don't know anything about that."

"But you have so much of it!"

"Have I?" He looked at her. "I'm not so sure. Let's go downstairs and look at the garden. There's a tree I want to look at especially."

"Your book shows a wonderful feeling for gardens," she said, reluctantly following his rapid descent of the stairs.

"What's that?" he asked when he had reached the ground floor.

"Your book showed a wonderful feeling for nature. I liked what you wrote about this part of Long Island. I had no idea it was so unusual."

He led the way briskly outdoors. "I wouldn't get many readers if I had to compete with what you poets have written about nature."

"Why, you're not bad. Not bad at all. And not nearly as much jargon in your style as I'd expected."

"Now! What do you think we ought to do about this?" He pointed to the silver poplar that reached up just outside the room where they had been. His black patch gave his other eye an expression of unusual intensity. "The first heavy wind will blow this down."

"What are those?" She pointed to some large semi-circular growths on the tree's trunk.

"Fungi."

"They're beautiful."

"Yes, but they're a sure sign that the tree is rotten. We'll have to do something about it, and right away. Notice how——"

"But I didn't know you were going to be here. I

thought you were going away this summer. I thought your wife was going to rent this place for the summer." She was filled with an unexpected hope.

"Wrong. We're not renting it." It was the first clear indication he had given of a firmness that she had, however, been sure of.

"That's wonderful! I'll be here too."

"You?"

"I'm going to stay in East Hampton until I talk you into giving me a job. I don't care what job. I'll stay at that inn we passed. I'm not going to California."

He looked at her intently. "I'm afraid you're making a mistake. I can't give you what you said you were going to California for. I have nothing whatever to do with religious faith. And I don't hire people because they need the work. The work has to need them."

"I'll make it need me! I believe so much in what you are doing, especially in that project you called your hobby. That's just what I need!"

"You're still talking of *your* needs. Can you type?"

"Not very well, but——"

The front door opened, and Carlotta stepped out on the porch. "There you are, David!" she called. "I've been looking everywhere for you." She seemed very tired, as she had also seemed when she said good-bye to Cyrilla's mother, and now with unexpected pathos she told her husband that she would not be able to stay downstairs for supper, she was going to bed. "You and Peter and Cyrilla can eat together."

This made Cyrilla happy, until he said, "No, no! I'm not hungry either. I'll take you upstairs and put you to bed." And he said good-night to Cyrilla so lightly that she found it difficult to believe that they had been engaged in a conversation that to her was extremely important. Not a word came from him about going on with it later. She felt rebuffed, especially when she saw the eagerness

with which he took his wife's arm and led her upstairs. The door of their bedroom could be heard closing after them just as Mr. Gillham's yellow Cadillac, with Pete at its wheel, turned into the driveway. Cyrilla ran to her room, to be alone. The tears were almost spurting from her eyes.

## XVIII

### MOTHER WIT

HER fatigue baffled Carlotta. There was a fatal yearning in her shoulders to slump and ruin her carriage. Ordinarily the good news from Morty would have put her in high spirits and high energy. Now, as she had seen in the mirror, she looked awful. Her sleep the night before had been full and untroubled, and the war in Korea had terrified her less than she had thought it was going to. Peter was not likely to be caught up in anything so remote and so confused. But she was extremely tired and extremely nervous, and the reason of course was David. She loved him, she loved him deeply, but she also mistrusted him, and whenever she was so completely divided in her feelings she lost her energy. Experience had taught her to go to bed at such times, at once.

Her mistrust of him was certainly justified. If she gave in to him, he would dominate her. He was much more tyrannical than he seemed. All through the afternoon she had encountered the suggestion that she was petty and wrong-headed to refuse to let him be the centre of attention that the others had wanted him to be, but those who supposed this did not know him at all. Once he was allowed to take over, there would be no heading him off.

His quietness, his modesty were nothing but tricks of his trade. This was also true of his absence of pedantry, his willingness to meet people half-way, to lend an ear to anyone. None of it meant anything. Sooner or later it would become clear that he was trapping all of them in nets of principle, and although he refrained from preaching he set up silently such a standard of selflessness that he might just as well have been standing in a pulpit. And when he did something selfish or stupid he soon saw what he had done and pointed it out and set about trying to correct it.

It was because he never preached that he was so deadly. She didn't get a chance to despise him. She despised herself instead. And what could be worse than that? At such times he had absolutely no appeal to the maternal instinct. He was a father, a leader: the embodiment of impersonality, responsibility, self-criticism. The brute in him had been put to work. Science got all his energy. In the old days, when he boarded a train, she used to hope that there would be three-inch headlines of the worst wreck in history. And also pray that he would come home to her.

It was highly significant that Greco wanted to go for walks with him. Although they disagreed about nearly everything. Their male minds suffered from the same blight of reason, and although they might never get together on details, they would quickly get together on the need for a better-run world. Better running was exactly what the world didn't need. Men always thought so, however, and that meant wars and more wars. Reason led to trouble. It was much wiser just to enjoy life. But that was something that scientists and anyone else who respected science would never understand. The bearded author in Italy, whose wife had taken off her shoes, had been right all along about science. It destroyed feeling, it destroyed enjoyment. She had been a fool to let it deceive her.

Thank God there were some men who understood these things and put them into words, so that she could understand them in words. She understood them easily without words, but minus the help of the poets she could never have said them even to herself. One of the greatest beauties of the theatre had been that it had given her the chance to pick up words, here and there, for almost any occasion.

The older she got, the clearer things were. She knew that the one thing she hated above everything else was system. The most systematic people she had ever known were Germans. Who started the last two wars? The Germans. Who were getting ready to start the next war? The Russians and the Americans. Perhaps they were even better organised than the Germans. Anyway there were more of them. Only a person with French blood, or Italian, could see it clearly. Just as only a woman could see through men.

David was always being praised for the distrust of pure logic in his book. He was clever at understanding the origin of diseases because he knew something about the unconscious and how strangely, how deviously, it could affect the body. And his popular book had been praised for its subtlety, its freedom from scientific sterility. Why? Because he had lived with her. Because she had taught him lessons that only a woman can teach, when he didn't know what she was doing to him! There was good stuff in him, but it had to be taken in hand, it had to be shaped. And then he had to be given the impression that he had done it all himself.

There was more than simple solicitude in his going upstairs with her. She would have to go to bed with him, and she wanted to go to bed with him, but she wished she weren't so dead-tired. It would probably take her a long time to get relaxed so that she could enjoy it. The last time she had been in bed with a man was in April. That

was Jean of the French delegation at U.N., with the thick soles on his shoes and the mop of yellow hair, who had been such a disappointment. He knew how to do it, and he knew how to order a dinner, and it was fun for a while to speak French with him, but in the end he bored her. She had to throw him out fast. It was a long time since she had felt really happy after love-making. It was much smarter to cut it out entirely and concentrate on work. It was also smarter not to see Europeans. They were so arrogant, they never understood what actual conditions in the theatre were, and so they talked unrealistically. Also, they said such 'stupid, unsympathetic things, about America. When they were gone she felt discontented. And she could be much funnier in English now than she was in French. She really didn't enjoy being with Europeans any more—or speaking French more than an hour. She had developed a language of her own—an American form of English, with just a trace of a French accent put on now and then. That was when she felt most in vein. That was when she had a style that she had created all by herself, in the tough competition of the commercial theatre, and she was proud of it. Only a fellow-actor would understand. Even David wouldn't.

But going to bed with him could be wonderful, if only she were careful not to let him get the upper hand. She must keep him always under control. Kid him. Let herself be persuaded but not consumed. When he was held at arm's length he felt on his mettle and wooed beautifully.

"Why did you come here? Why didn't you stay down there?" she asked when they got to her room. She sat on the bed, exhausted.

"I'm not hungry either." He took her hand.

"Cyrilla will miss you."

"Who? No, I don't think so."

"Oh, yes! She'll be coming here any minute, with some very good reason why she absolutely has to see you."

"Well, in that case——" He closed the door and locked it.

"A fine thing when a husband and wife——"

"—have to lock themselves in." He smiled as he completed the sentence for her.

She smiled grimly. "I don't know why I feel so terrible. I have you back, and today I had a wonderful break."

He put both his hands on her shoulders, and leaned over and kissed her on the forehead, the eyebrow, the mouth.

"Why didn't she go home?" she complained. She wanted to tease, but her fatigue made her whine.

"Don't worry about her! Can I help it if my book happens to appeal to bobbysoxers?"

"It wasn't just the book. I noticed how the women looked at you in the Club, and Dolly too, even in the midst of all the excitement. That patch on your eye is almost like a beauty mark. Trust you to turn it into something attractive. Oh, darling, I just felt sick when I saw it. Why didn't you write me about it?" She made him sit next to her on the bed again and kissed him gently below and above his wounded eye.

"It's much less bother than I thought it would be. I'm almost glad I can't do as much reading as I used to."

"I'd have rushed over to you!"

"Of course you would have." He patted her cheek.

"Are you really happy to be home?"

"I didn't know I'd like it so much." He was obviously sincere—and full of desire. For a while she had feared that he might shut her out with some new development of his austerity, but it was plain that his lean gristly frame was as famished as ever. Cyril might attribute saintliness to him, but Cyril had never been in bed with him.

"You know what I kept thinking all day?"

"What?"

"Would he have come home if he hadn't had a fight with *her*?"

"Her?"

She rose and walked away from him. "Of course! That's why you didn't let me know about your eye. You didn't *want* me to rush to you. You didn't want me to meet her."

She was not acting. Once again she was so tired that she couldn't tease well. Genuine sadness had overtaken her, and that was a mistake. She mustn't let herself be caught up in any excesses of feeling.

He followed her and again put his hands on her shoulders and kissed her. "Some day I'll tell you all about her. I think you'll find you two had a lot in common, and——"

"Yes, you!" Her wit retrieved her from her sadness, and she felt better.

"—and you'll like her. The point is, we're together again. The only reason I'm here is you. I haven't asked *you* about what's been happening to you, and I won't. No, by God, I will! Come on, trot out your lover. Where is he hiding? I want to smack him one."

"Where do they usually hide? Under the bed, of course," she said wearily.

"You're slipping, my dear. Is what I saw at lunch the best you can do these days? I thought that you'd at least have the Bonacker Beaut himself."

"What you saw is typical of the best picking I've had."

"Not even a house-painter?"

"Not even a house-painter."

"That's a shame. I wanted some stiff competition."

"Oh, the competition has been stiff enough. But not very interesting." She began to unbutton her blouse. "Do it for me, dear, I'm tired." Actually, for some reason, she felt much, much better, and her fatigue was beginning to leave her. But it mightn't be wise to let him know. Better to put him on his mettle and force him to do his best job. And meanwhile she could be pleasantly detached. It was already obvious that he was determined to make a success



of his homecoming. There was an almost frantic desire in him to make his peace with her. Let him work at it, then. He was very serious about their marriage, he had written, and would do everything in his power to make it work. All right, the next step was up to him.

He undid the buttons of her blouse as she half-lay passively on the bed's edge. "I love you, I love you," he said fiercely. His virility seemed unimpaired by his bad habits of exhausting his reserves.

"I'm tired," she continued to protest, petulantly, although she felt wonderfully relaxed and quite fresh. "I don't want to——"

He picked her up and dumped her on the bed. "You will, you will," he promised. He did everything she wanted him to do, and exactly as she wanted him to do it, and she protested all the way.

## PART THREE

### XIX

#### MARRIAGE SONG

MONDAY morning came gently to the indifferent blue ocean, to the white Presbyterian steeple which unobtrusively announced six o'clock, to the main street that in the 'gos had been the scene of impromptu trotting races and now was being freshly diagonalled for tourist parking. The early train had not yet passed through on its hundred-mile trip to New York. Irish maids rode English bicycles to early mass. Mr. Higginbotham's cows were already complaining. A prize-winning dog barked in the back of a station wagon. Through handsome wide windows, curtained in filmy white and bedded with geraniums, golden light fell upon a man in white pyjamas who sat writing at a desk and upon a woman who lay in bed with a smile of happiness on a face that ordinarily was sad in repose.

'I must give some money to Peter,' Carlotta was thinking when she woke up. 'He needs new clothes. And we must begin to pull strings. He ought to go to that school this summer. He *mustn't* go to war. I'll keep the house open all summer. David was right. He will want to walk around the grounds, go to the beach, look after the garden, play tennis. I can drive back late Saturday night, or if there isn't enough time, he can visit me.'

But a few seconds later she was also thinking, 'I must

take him out to see the barn next door. I'll take him up in that loft where I almost fell through. The carvings will interest him. There's a tractor right below, but it's not so high up that he would be killed. It will have to be this morning, because I'm going into the City this afternoon.' And it seemed entirely right that she should have this thought, because of all the injuries he had done her.

Through an open window a silver sea glow fell on her face and her black hair. She felt at the moment Italian, like a Renaissance madonna. At a table she could see David writing in a tan notebook with a mechanical pencil, and she felt no surprise at seeing him. On the contrary, she had the impression that he had been there many other mornings, and a near decade of absence was not real but imaginary.

"Darling!" she called to him tenderly.

He closed his notebook and came to her.

"I'm so happy," she said. "I love you."

He kissed her. "I love you," he said, and he sounded amazingly like the poor Sag Harbor boy who twenty-two years before had been overwhelmed by the well-tended body of an heiress.

"Get into bed with me."

He got into bed with her.

"I feel so close to you. Put your arms around me. Saturday I was so miserable, lying here alone, and now I have you! It's wonderful. I can't believe it, and at the same time I feel as if you had never left me. Now I can be a woman again. I don't know what I've been all these years—something that really wasn't me—but now I feel as if I had been suddenly cured of a long illness." She kissed him.

"That's what I wanted to hear," he whispered, and a look of medical delight passed over his face, as if his professional patience had been rewarded.

"Take off your pyjamas. I want to devour you." She

raised his black patch, and kissed his dead eye solemnly. "You're such a good man. You make me ashamed of myself. And you're so strong!"

Later she said, "Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to give Peter a cheque today for five hundred dollars. He ought to go to that school in New Hampshire to get ready for the Foreign Service."

"I think travel would be good for him. Make him less literary."

"There's good stuff in him. Even when he's torturing me I can see that. Some day we'll be proud of him. He'll be an ambassador."

"Well, if that's what he's cut out for."

She threw off the covers and sat on the edge of the bed.

"There's a Greek statue in the Louvre with breasts like yours," he said. "There isn't a drooping line in your entire body. And you have that wonderful olive pallor of the Latins. I wanted to come back to you all the time. The sculptor must have had a model like you. It's the same kind of Mediterranean body."

He kissed her on the navel. "I was reading the Bible the other day and thinking of you. There's a marriage song in it. 'Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.' Mmmm . . . I never could remember verse."

"And yesterday I lay here worrying whether I'd get the part of Sanseverina. They may make a film of *La Chartreuse de Parme*. And now I just don't give a damn!"

"Good! You'll get what you want if you feel like that."

But as he reassured her and by implication gave his blessing to her ambitions, she made a catastrophic discovery. She was happy! And she didn't want to go on with her plans for the summer. While she had been talking she had been thinking ahead to the following Monday morning, when she would be on the Cape and about to open again in *His French Wife*. She saw exactly what

would happen, she had been through it so many times.

She would not be lying in his arms, she would wake alone in an impeccably colonial room in a gem-like New England inn, in a genuine antique four-poster bed that was not unlike her own, and with sunlight streaming through a white dimity canopy that also was not unlike her own, but under such conditions of perfect simulation as to make her loss the more unbearable. And instead of rejoicing in the re-won love of her son, she would have to keep her attention focused throughout the day upon a part in a play that her son would despise her for having anything to do with. She would be, in short, in a position that stage-struck girls and unhappy wives would bitterly envy her and that she would be unable to enjoy. Once again under the spell of her silent, agreeable, but subtle husband, her power to enjoy would be changed and curtailed. She was *already* under it! The banners of show business had fallen during the night before the banners of disinterested thought. Any other husband would have been proud of her stardom; hers had quietly undermined it. While she had thought to conquer him in bed, he had conquered her. She was too sensitive, too intelligent, too susceptible. Too *feminine*. She was still paying the price of her early education. She was still not coarse enough to throw off his influence. And she was in a business that punished the slightest deviation from coarseness, that demanded its highest penalty for the softness that came with love. This was why of course she only ranked among the secondary great of the theatre: as yet she could not be vulgar, she could not be selfish enough.

But she had made much progress towards her goal, and exactly in this way: by seeing the situation so clearly and then doing what had to be done. It was still not too late!

She got out of bed quickly. "Zut! I must do my exercises," she said, while she slipped away from him. And the coolish air of the morning helped her self-possession at

once. The particles of masculine clarity that she had painstakingly collected throughout her professional years began to reassemble in militant formations while she stretched out on the floor to begin a callisthenic ritual, called 'the wave', which demanded perfect concentration.

"You look beautiful when you—" he started to say, but she stopped him instantly. "Please don't say anything," she begged through breath shortened by exertion. "I have to keep my mind on it," and recommenced her ritual at once. It was easier then to change her vision of the weeks that lay ahead.

The gem-like inn became historical and charming. The other actors became gay, witty companions, instead of unspeakably sad. The reception that was given after the opening night performance became a spontaneous demonstration of local *Gemütlichkeit*, instead of the routine attempt of a local rich woman to drain off some of the canned glamour from a package show. It was easy to effect magic metamorphoses of this kind when your imagination had been trained to do it eight times weekly for an audience. The gilt spray was merely turned on yourself.

The play itself was rewritten while her body glided effortlessly from a supine position on the floor to a closed, back-bent circle with her hands between her feet. 'The wave' rose like water from a flat sea and broke on the shore—fifty times instead of the usual twenty-five—while the part of Claudette in *His French Wife* turned from an elaborate dirty joke into pert wholesomeness. The story, in fact, had never been bad: a virginal American soldier, who was an accountant in civilian life, brings home to a Vermont village, as his war bride, a *petite* French magdalen with altogether too much vitality. After their long-delayed first night the virginal husband is thought to have died from an excess of happiness. For forty-eight hours he shows almost no signs of life. But then he returns from

the brink of the grave, with an awakened appreciation of connubial bliss, while his startled bride has already begun to merge with the New England scene and to take on the mannerisms of a prude and a puritan. If its fun had not been pornography and if its social comment had not been chauvinism, it might have passed for an amusing comedy. Now, while the wave broke again and again, she saw little ways to depornograph and dechauvinise it, little tricks that she might use to make it more palatable to herself while not harming it at the box office. It *could* be done! It was an actor's power to revise a script subtly to conform with his own sensibility—which almost invariably was superior to that of the playwright—that provided the gambling thrill that she liked most in the theatre.

It *could* be done! She felt better when the wave had broken for the fiftieth time, amid perfect silence from David, who watched her from a raised elbow on the bed, and she got up from the floor, freed once more from his spell and determined not to fall under it again.

"Come here," he pleaded, and she shivered as she thought that a few minutes earlier she would instantly and delightedly have obeyed.

"Have to take my bath now," she shouted gaily and rushed into the bathroom and turned on the hot water and sprinkled it freely with crystals which gave off a heavy odour that always seemed to her Carthaginian. The thought occurred to her that even in ancient times women must have had to find such ways to remove themselves from the domination of men. Otherwise they would never have had any lives of their own. There must always have been some women who preferred self-expression to subordination. She had tried to get this idea across to her stupid analyst, before she left him.

But every woman had not been cursed with a husband who combined cleverness and virility with persistence and an astonishing power for breaking down her defences.

While she poured the bath salts, David slipped noiselessly into the bathroom behind her and startled her by putting his hands on both her breasts. Once again he was over-spending himself, and with a tirelessness that at another time would have been delightful.

"Oh no!" she whimpered savagely, and struggled so hard to break away from him that she kicked her shin hard against the tub, and tears of pain started from her eyes. One touch of his hands and she had weakened already and saw her career in the theatre as a miserable self-deception that merely allowed her to be *used* by agents and producers and backers and real-estate men and newspapermen and a vile horde of others whom she detested as soon as she came under his influence. She was nothing but a source of gross ridicule and net profit to strangers. She had suffered the worst indignity, she had been prostituted, dehumanised, defeminised. The contempt that she had seen the day previous in the odious Gillham's eye was the true measure of her 'success'. When David came near her she had to face the truth about herself. He was so habitually devoted to truth that others also, when they came near him, could be content with nothing less—or at least that was the way *she* felt.

"What's the matter?" he asked sympathetically, seeing her tears and instantly relinquishing his embrace. "I'm so sorry, dear!"

"It's all right," she said after a while. "I'm—I'm just a little nervous. I think I'd better be alone while I take my bath."

"All right," he agreed.

She smiled at him winningly, already beginning to play a rôle again, already finding little ways to remove herself from his power. And when he had backed awkwardly out of the door, she closed it, and began doing another exercise: this time one that merely required her to inhale and exhale deeply and slowly, with perfect mental con-



centration, however, that again made it possible for her to shut him out and to reassert her own desires.

Later, while she bathed, she grew angry with him. He wasn't serving her usefully any more. Her investment in him had ceased to pay dividends. And she need not worry about her analyst's pat phrases about 'Park Avenue psychology' and 'incipient paranoia'. On the contrary, unless she were very firm with David, he might actually do her a serious injury. She must find a way to reassert her ascendancy over him. She must not permit him to make her ashamed of her way of life. His view of it was incredibly narrow: that was the only reason he threatened to dominate her. She must fight him off, but not by any miserable devices for putting distance between them or by any artificial emergency measures like her exercises. She must *act*, she must act decisively, so that no more emergency measures would be necessary. The incident of the cellar stairs in which she had never really understood, now became entirely clear to her. He had *forced* her to act against him, because that was all she *could* do! It was too late for her to give up a career that meant so much to her, that she had put so much time and so much desire into: he must therefore be prevented from making it *ever again* distasteful to her. He must be stopped from taking advantage of his masculine powers. She must find all the feminine cunning at her command—even though she loved him! *Because* she loved him!

Take him out to the barn—that was the only thing to do. A sure instinct told her it was *right*. But when you had an idea like that, you also had to have the courage to act upon it. That was the difference between those who ruled and those who were ruled. Rulers developed higher, freer consciences—the kind that David himself called 'transmoral', the kind that he said all superior people acquired—and thus could face the muck that *any* success entailed.

She soaped herself all over with warm suds and felt better. The night had almost been a major defeat, but now she could face the future with confidence—and the kind of uncertainty that she enjoyed most of all. It was like waiting for the dealer to deal you five cards face down.

## XX

### THE SEVEREST LOVE

WHEN David came to the breakfast table Cyrilla felt she was looking at an entirely different man. Yesterday he had been a highly desirable teacher, and now the truth had become so obvious that she wondered whether the best single word for him was 'naïve' or 'undisciplined' or 'dupe'. When she had picked up his book again, upon going to bed, she had quickly found confirmation of the weaknesses that his surrender to his wife at first revealed. She wondered why she had ever been deceived by it. And now that he emerged again from his wife's bedroom there was only one word for the expression on his face; it was 'gross'.

The evening before, when he had disappeared upstairs, she had found herself unable to drink the murky high-ball that Pete, when she finally came out of her room, prepared for her. Instead, she turned down her glass abruptly while Pete murmured something about the ill effects of alcohol on mahogany and ran to get a rag, while she said she did not feel like eating supper, and walked out alone and down to the sea. She stayed there for an hour or two and went to her bedroom when she came back to the house, refusing to talk to him, but did not sleep as well as she had hoped, and was back at the sea's edge at

six o'clock in the morning. Pleased by her refusal of whisky, by her clear head, by her lack of hunger, and strengthened by an early-morning acceptance of the isolation that seemed inevitably in store for her all her life, she began turning over on her tongue the first tentative lines of what might be developed into a poem. *Leave-taking* it might be called. The first few lines had come uninvited and would need much revision. While looking at the sea she had remembered a scene from her childhood, when a gull had caught a clam and had tirelessly dropped it on rocks, in the hope of cracking its shell and eating it. The first lines of the poem had meanwhile crowded on her tongue. But she had been unable either to go farther with them or to polish them, and finally found herself thinking about an enormous statue in India, fifty-six feet high, of a famous yogin, so meditative that his legs became covered with ivy. It was very old, but its surface had been kept fresh by pouring butter over it every twenty-five years. Her mind was tired now, and she went back to the house now, defeated and hungry. She had eaten almost all of her breakfast when Pete came downstairs, in sneakers, white shorts, and a T-shirt, and she had been eager to sit and talk with him, so that he would not be hurt by what she had done the night before. He seemed such a lonely boy, as much in need of friendship as herself, and therefore it pleased her to find that he did not resent her desertion of him. "After all," he said, "didn't I do the same thing to you the night before?" On second thought she decided that he was not as weak as he had seemed. The Korean War plainly weighed on his mind, but he was not going to be stampeded into enlisting.

She was telling him about the *Bhagavad Gita's* subtle teaching on the subject of war—who was supposed to fight and who was not supposed to fight—when his mother and father came downstairs. Instantly both she and Pete turned to examine them with such close scrutiny that they

might have been bacteria on microscopic slides in a time of plague.

"Well," said Pete, "here you are. Good-morning." There was a note of apprehension in his voice. He did not rise as his mother approached.

"Good-morning, Peter!" Carlotta bent over him and kissed his cheek. "Good-morning, Cyrilla!"

"You went to bed awfully early," said Pete.

"Good-morning, Pete!" said David cheerily. "Good-morning!" he called in the same tone, with a friendly smile, to Cyrilla.

"Good-morning," she said without much enthusiasm.

"You were saying that the school in New Hampshire starts its summer course this week. Why don't you wire them that you'll be there?" Carlotta sat down, helped into her seat by David. "My, this is the first time I've had my breakfast here in a long time. I had no idea the light was so beautiful on that wall."

"But, Mother, you know very well——"

"Here's a cheque that ought to cover your tuition and other expenses. And I'd like you to drive me to the City this afternoon. When you're there why don't you go into Tony Harrison's place and have him make you some suits?"

Pete looked astonished. "You mean——?"

"You really want to go to the school, don't you?" David asked, sitting down. "It would be better than off-shore fishing, wouldn't it?"

"Of course, but——"

David turned politely to Cyrilla. "It's unfair to make you listen to family matters, but there isn't much time, it seems."

"Not at all. I feel as if I already knew all about you, anyway." She found herself, to her chagrin, smiling back at him eagerly, although she had determined to let him know exactly how she felt.

"What about the money you gave me yesterday, Father?"

"Deposit both cheques today. Before we change our minds!"

Pete got up and went to his mother and kissed her. "Mother, I don't know how to thank you." He seemed truly confused and apologetic.

"You'll thank me best by not getting into this horrible war. I'll want to leave by one o'clock. *Ça va?*"

"*Ça va,*" he said. "But your car needs some work. I'll take it to the garage this morning."

Cyrilla looked at Carlotta with interest. "Are you really driving into the City today?"

"Yes."

"And you're staying here?" Cyrilla asked David.

"Yes."

"I'll call the 1770 House for you right after breakfast," Carlotta offered. "I'm sure they'll have a room. The season hasn't really begun."

"Gee, it seems a shame to make her spend her money when we have so many——" Peter began.

"I'm sure you'll understand, my dear," Carlotta continued suavely to her. "The doctor is a public man, and he couldn't afford to have any breath of scandal about——"

"Of course, of course," Cyrilla interrupted sourly. "But if there were going to be any scandal, the mere fact that I was staying at an inn wouldn't stop it."

"Since there isn't any danger of scandal," David said with a suavity equal to Carlotta's, "you really ought to stay here. But under the circumstances——"

"Don't worry, I'll go," she said.

"Mother, will you excuse me?" Pete asked, rising, after a final sip of coffee. "I'll have a lot to do, with re-packing, getting the car fixed, and all the rest." He bent over her and kissed her warmly.

"Of course, dear." She looked happy.

"I'll see you later, Father. You too," he called to Cyrilla, as he left the room.

Cyrilla's breakfast had also been eaten, but she made no move to leave the table. Instead, she lit a cigarette, picked tobacco shreds from her mouth, and stared grimly at husband and wife as they drank their fruit juice and began to eat. Carlotta's breakfast was lighter than David's, consisting only of tomato juice, one boiled egg, one piece of melba toast, and black coffee, and she ate it with studied charm. He on the other hand said he particularly enjoyed a typical American breakfast of orange juice, oatmeal, two eggs, scrambled, toast, and coffee. He tried to start conversation with this kind of remark, but got no response. No longer able to be pleased merely because he threw a word at her, Cyrilla had fallen into a glum silence and grew more and more moody by contrast with the good spirits of the others.

Carlotta remarked to David with a half-wink, "What's that line from Shakespeare? You know, about crabbed youth?"

"I've forgotten it."

"'Crabbed youth and age cannot live together,'" Carlotta said haltingly, and then with more speed, "'Age is full of pleasure, youth is full of care.'"

"It's the other way round," said Cyrilla. "Crabbed *age* and youth—!"

"Is it, dear? Things must have been different in the Bard's day."

There was a silence while Cyrilla felt loftily above this kind of repartee and Carlotta exhaled more animal contentment every second.

"Who was it who said that youth was too good a thing to be wasted on the young?" she asked David after a pause.

"Shaw, wasn't it?"

"If Bartlett's *Quotations* were lost, you could restore them line by line, couldn't you?" Cyrilla observed to Carlotta.

"No, dear, I'd pass them all off as my own."

Another silence, while Cyrilla felt intellectually scandalised and Carlotta put down her napkin. "Excuse me, please," she said to both of them, and to David, "I must run upstairs for a light coat, if I'm going to show you that place. It's still chilly these mornings." She made the act of rising from the table look like a lovely dance.

When she had left there was another silence. At last Cyrilla spoke. Her opportunity had come to let him know how disappointed she felt. "Well," she said caustically. "Our odyssey is over, and our hero is home. The suitors have been routed, and Penelope is back at her spinning-wheel—spinning, spinning, spinning." Words came to her readily now, as they hadn't when she had been trying to compose her poem. And the reason, of course, was that she had thrown away all caution.

"You don't make it sound like a happy ending."

"Is it a happy ending?"

"It's happy, but of course it's not an ending. A beginning, rather."

"A beginning of what? Solid middle-class bliss?"

"I hope not."

"Of what, then?"

"Look—!" he began with a professional crispness, and then paused. "I was going to call you by your name, but I don't remember it. I don't want to hurt you, but don't you think that what I do with my life, even if I make a mess of it, is my affair?"

Large tears filled her large eyes. His not knowing her name hurt most of all. "I spent a horrible night," she said, to her own surprise. "I should have gone out and found a man. That's the best way of course. Sheer animality? But I couldn't, I couldn't."

"What do you know about sheer animality?" He smiled paternally.

"Plenty! Don't treat me like a child! Sometimes you make me think of an English professor sneering at Rimbaud. Rimbaud knew more than any professor ever will! I'm just a fool to you, a fool who got interested in a book you wrote years ago. Not much of a feather, of course, but one more decoration for the cap. If you only knew how I've changed my mind about you. *And* your book! How safe you've played it! You never really took a chance the way poets do. You always had a good job, a solid foundation behind you. No wonder you had to go into the War! To supply the danger that had been missing in your life. Now I know why you wrote so brilliantly about the Promethean urge. Because you didn't feel it. And why you wrote so brilliantly about women's feelings. Because you didn't understand them. It's all a tremendous substitute."

He listened carefully to this outburst, and as if not surprised by it. "Maybe you're right."

"And your *humility* doesn't impress me any more either," she said savagely. "It's just a professional mask. Actually, you wouldn't dare be caught in a mistake, which is the only real humility."

"You may have something there."

"The poet is willing to be subjective. He always speaks from his feelings. He is willing to make mistakes. If he's really good, he ends by being objective—but only by taking chances. You professors never take chances. You get your objectivity right off. The easy way."

"You know, you speak very well." He smiled at her.

"I only speak when I feel. I have the right to speak now because I'm in love. I don't mind admitting it. You must have seen it anyway."

"I'm in love too," he said quickly.

"That's not love!"



"All right, since you have gift of divination, what is it?"

"That's something else." She fought for words. "It's another way of playing safe. You started out with—a certain woman—so you want to come back with her, even though you no longer have any real connection with her."

"But I do. She's much more interesting to me than—than any other woman." At any rate he had been forced to speak out more openly than he had done at any other time. His professional mask was off.

"Really?" She scanned his face with no diminishment of her contempt.

"Yes! I can learn more here than anywhere else."

"Learn? Is that the way you talk about love?"

"Yes, the romantic part soon wears off, but if there are deep interests in common— My scientific interests always have to be satisfied. My home is my laboratory."

"Now I understand you better! And I was fool enough to think I could learn from a scientist! Oh, we need people like you. But you're so small. So pedantic. The world won't be worth living in until we've so thoroughly assimilated the scientists that the poets can take over again. Knowledge must be joined to being. That's what existentialism's all about. I'm a mess. I know it. Look at my fingernails." She held up ten disfigured stubs, bitten and yellow. "In another three years, if I go on the way I'm going, I'll be an alcoholic. I need help. I thought you could give it to me. I thought that you at least were free from the will to extinction that is so common among our men. I'm sorry, I made a mistake." She gathered her cigarettes and matches together and got up from the table. He rose too. "Don't get up. Here comes your wife. Every hair in place. And just the right coat to wear on a chilly summer morning in the country." She held out a bunch of her dirty sweat-shirt, to emphasise the contrast.

"Are you ready?" Carlotta asked her husband.

"I'm going, Mrs. Holderness. In half an hour I'll be

out of your house." It gave Cyrilla satisfaction to put it that way, to exit snarling.

"Oh dear, you don't have to rush off like that!"

"But I want to." She would not, however, go to the Inn. She would go to the railway station and start the first leg of her trip to California. The change that had taken place in him had decided her. If weakness of the flesh meant such a loss of dignity in a person of superior potentialities, she must enter the Vedanta convent as soon as possible. Strict asceticism was the only cleanliness.

"Well," Carlotta smiled at her with deliberate incomprehension, "we'll see you when we come back from our walk. Come along, dear," she said to David. "I want to show it to you." And never had Cyrilla been more convinced of her destructiveness, which seemed quite mad, than at that moment.

"I don't think I want to today," David began. "There are so many other things that——"

"But this is the only time I'll be free for it." Carlotta put her arm in his. "Come on!" She was in such a decisive mood that resistance to her seemed unthinkable.

"But——"

"Let's go out the back way."

Cyrilla noticed that he looked back at her as he was swept away. Immediately she regretted every word she had said. He had been giving himself to others for such a long time that he seemed to have almost no corporeal energy left. His face frightened her, and she forgave his unbudging refusal to help her. He seemed as helpless and as absurd as the clam she had remembered earlier in the morning, picked up and dropped again and again, by a patient, determined gull which flew above the rocks that would crack its frail defence, until at last it was broken. Only he was still more absurd than the clam, because he had come from the other side of the world to put himself in the bird of prey's beak.

## XXI

## THE STRICKEN BEAST

CARLOTTA was in high spirits. It pleased her especially to be carrying David's seed within her while it was powerless to discommode her plans and while she enjoyed the luxury of working out the details of the corrective action that she was obliged to take against him. Her ability to free herself from his influence when it had already begun to divide and conquer her had put her in her best fighting trim. She had always preferred the French phrase '*prendre une décision*' and its literal English equivalent 'take a decision' to the American way of expressing the same idea, 'make a decision', because 'taking' implied more steadfastness than 'making'. When you took a decision you were more inclined to stand by it, as a matter of policy, than if you merely made it. Your whole way of life had gone, of course, into that decision, which should not be taken lightly. It was one of the few occasions when she preferred English usage to American. Ordinarily she delighted in the greater vigour of the newer tongue.

Her decision, long ago, had been for the theatre, and when it was challenged by David, though silently, she had seen that she must fight back. She must never again permit him to attack her life-strategy, and since he would always do so, by his mere existence, she must find a way to put herself beyond the range of his attack for ever. He must be deprived of the weapon that he had used against her. The name of that weapon was love. He must never again be permitted to weaken her with love. She loved him, she loved him passionately, but she did not propose to be destroyed by her feeling for him. Another woman might have let herself be talked out of her professional

decision, and enjoyed, or thought she enjoyed, her weakness. That kind of irresolution was contemptible. Such women deserved nothing better than the nagging subservience they got. They could not *act*.

Breakfast had reinstated her contempt for Cyrilla. The girl had much less wit than she had imagined. Her high-brow disdain was nothing but sour grapes for the fun she was afraid to have in bed. It had been absurd ever to build her up into anything formidable. The wrinkles of an overworked conscience were already being written into a high, intellectual forehead. There were not enough animal spirits. She would degenerate into a do-gooder—or a drunk.

David also deserved some contempt. He had not seen what was happening when his much too devoted wife tore herself away from him and effected her liberation by doing her exercises. And he was supposed to be a good psychologist. While he leaned on his elbow she had turned him into a mere object which could be manipulated correctly according to the demands of her career. The penalty for that kind of mistake, when he played the deep game that he was playing, when he sought to dominate her so drastically, could be severe. And it would serve him right. But more important, it would put her permanently beyond the reach of his moralistic wiles.

"What was she saying about my coat?" she asked him as they went out by the back door. She was not genuinely interested in Cyrilla's opinion of her coat, but it was the first gambit that occurred to her, and her ability to find the right action came invariably from following her first, her most natural, inclination.

"She was admiring it."

"Tell me, is she a fool or isn't she?" She could ask the question, although it didn't much interest her, because she already knew the answer.

"She's no fool," he said soberly. His answer was not

intelligent because he, like the girl, could be the victim of superimposed morality.

"She's awfully rude. Now she 'wants' to be out of the house."

"She's a very remarkable girl. There's more to her than I thought."

"She was talking about me. What did she say?"

"No, no."

"What did she say?" While she repeated her question she knew what he would answer, although he plainly didn't wish to, because the advantage had definitely passed to her.

"She thinks I don't love you. She's wrong, of course."

"What else did she say?"

"She thinks you're bad for me."

"What else?"

"Nothing."

"Go on." There was no jealousy and no self-laceration in Carlotta's tone, only curiosity, a determination to get the facts. Her professional training in receiving directorial criticism came to her aid. Also, she felt genuine indifference now to anything he might say.

"She thinks I'm a phony. I play safe all the time. I write about things that I don't understand."

"Yesterday she was telling you what a great writer you were."

"I don't have the kind of insight that poets have."

"She's just sore because you didn't play up to her. That's all there is to it."

"Oh, no."

"It's sour grapes." Carlotta's anger started up suddenly, unexpectedly. And she liked giving way to her feelings on impulse: it strengthened her emotional power on-stage. "Imagine! Telling you all that and sitting there in my house and eating my food! I've half a mind to go back and tell her off. The little sneaky—!"

"Oh, she'd be willing to tell it to you, to your face, I'll bet."

"That doesn't make it any better. I've half a mind to call up her mother and tell her what this little——"

"What good would that do you? Let's drop it," he said. "I don't mind being called a phony if you don't mind being called——" He stopped.

"Called a what?"

"It doesn't matter. She says there's no real connection between us."

"Called a what?" she insisted. At last there was a chance to get him to say openly the criticisms of herself that he so obviously thought. And then it would be much easier to act against him. They were approaching the Higginbotham barn which she had told him she wanted to show him. Fortunately, no one was there.

"Let's drop it," he said in a tone which meant that he would not enter into any further discussion. His good humour was wearing off; she would have to act fast.

"Very well," she said irritably, then almost instantly changed her tone. "Well, here's the barn." She summoned her most enthusiastic voice and took his hand affectionately. "Isn't it beautiful?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"It always was *our* barn, and now we're going to own it!"

"Not very well kept up."

"When I get through with it, it will be a gem! But I'll need your ideas, dear. And since you're going to be here you might look after the workmen and see that they do the job right. They may begin before I get back from the tour."

"Dear," he said, "there's something I've wanted to tell you. We haven't had much time together, and——"

"Let's go upstairs."

"I'd rather not. You see——"

"Come on! There are some extraordinary carvings on

the wall. They must have been done in the eighteenth century!" She took his arm and led him to the stairway.

"But, you see, I won't be able to——"

"You go first!" She made him precede her on the stairs, and followed very cautiously

When he got to the loft he took a look at the harness and the seashells and the cobwebs and the old magazines and said, "All right, now I've seen it and it's just as sloppy as the rest."

She pointed to the far wall. "The carvings are over there." Now that she had gone this far, there must be no turning back. She must make certain that he crossed the floor. Otherwise there would be a return of the horrible boxed-in feeling that had come over her in the bedroom.

"I'm not interested in any carvings," he said firmly. "I'm not interested in the barn either. You see, I'm sick. I'm going into the hospital tomorrow."

"The hospital?"

"They're going to operate on me."

"What is it? Your eye?"

"No, that will come later—if this one works out all right. But this is more serious. It's gastric carcinoma. My father had it too. You know, cancer of the stomach."

"Cancer!" But the dreadful word did not surprise her nearly as much as she might have expected; she felt that she had been waiting for it all the time.

"Oh, I think we're catching it in time." And she became aware of something that she had noticed when he first mentioned his disease: that he spoke of it as if it belonged to someone else, not himself.

"Darling!" she said. "Let's go downstairs!" And she began to tremble as she hurried down the dirty, wobbly steps ahead of him. "Come on!" she called to him from below. "Hurry!"

He was very slow about coming down. When he was safely on the ground floor, she kissed his cheek, his mouth,

his throat, thinking: 'And only a few hours ago I was telling him how strong he was!' He seemed now like a stricken beast which had come home to its lair in a time of supreme trial. His taciturnity, which had been greater than usual, became clear to her, and his frantic desire to re-establish his intimacy with her before he went to the surgeon. She regretted now the exercises that had separated her from him. They had been unnecessary. If she had only waited——!

"It's really nothing to worry about if it's caught in time. I'll probably be all right by the end of the summer. I'm sorry I didn't take more interest in the carvings, I know how much they mean to you, but——"

"No, no," she said, fighting tears of sympathy and tears of relief. "Let's go home. Let's go home!" And she held on to his hand.

## XXII

### ONE FOR THE ROAD

THERE was a large picture of a woman in the back part of the Ford garage which ordinarily made Pete sore. It was a colour photograph, and its pinko-white flesh tones were temptingly realistic. Nude, red-haired, familiar, she squatted on her haunches while she played solitaire. Her breasts were exceptionally large, though they did not droop, and her friendly smile seemed to be meant expressly for him. The card in her hand was an over-size ace of hearts, so large as to cover all signs of her genitalia. Ordinarily he disliked going into that part of the garage because she reminded him of the nude photographs of his mother that he had discovered in a bureau drawer and



destroyed. Now, however, after delivering the Ford to a mechanic who had sat next to him in the first grade, he passed her without the shy, angry glance that he usually gave her, and when by chance his eyes fell on her he smiled at his former emotion. Too much had been happening lately to let him dwell any more on such trifles. She meant no more to him than the college girls with whom he had had his forgotten love affairs—and not as much as the married woman in Arlington, Mass., ticket-taker in a movie house, whose full-blooded plebeian ardour had given him new standards of feminine excellence.

The war news had affected him exactly as the beginning of a ball game did. Before he trotted out on the field to take his place as second baseman for the Harvard team, or went to bat as the third man in the line-up, he had always felt as scattered and as apprehensive as he had been before he heard the broadcasts from Tokyo and Washington. Action steadied him. Now, whether the Army grabbed him or he was permitted to go through with his diplomatic studies, he would not yearn again for a chance to ripen slowly in the sun at the foot of a maroon and white lighthouse such as there was *near-by* at Montauk Point. On the contrary, he felt ready and eager for any fate that might be in store for him, and rather glad that he did not have to try to shape it himself.

He told his grade-school classmate what he wanted—a lubrication<sup>o</sup> job, an oil change, and the spare tyre put in place of the right front one, which had been injured by parking against street kerbs. While they talked—as if no time had passed since their last meeting and as if there were no difference in their economic status—Pete recalled his argument of the day before with Greco when he had expressed his disbelief in the intelligence of 'the people'. Now he regretted what he had said and attributed it to an over-emotional reaction against popular cant in newspapers and magazines. Actually it was impossible for him

to feel anything but close to 'the people', at least those he had grown up with.

Then he went out into the sunlight and started towards the Post Office to get the mail for his mother. There wouldn't be any for him, but there always was a lot of it for her. During his walk to the Post Office he met the grey-suited, smiling rector of the Episcopal Church, who invited him to attend a special meeting for young people the following night in the parish house; a stout real-estate agent who congratulated him on his batting average, which had been the second highest in the Ivy League, and said the time had come when he ought to start thinking of some straight life insurance; a roofing salesman who asked him to ask his mother if she hadn't better reshingle the little house on Toilsome Lane which she had bought as an investment; and a nice old Irishwoman whose husband had worked in the Holderness garden until his death from a heart attack two years before and whose pride kept her from taking relief—she was working hard as a charwoman to support her three children, although she plainly needed a rest or would soon become ill herself.

A few doors before he reached the Post Office Pete passed a bar where a thirty-inch plastic chef held out a dusty *pizza* and an orange neon advertisement for beer buzzed and glowed in the daylight. He thought he saw someone he recognised. He stopped, walked back a step or two, and saw Cyrilla on an imitation brown leather stool with chromium rungs. A highball glass was in her hand, and she saw him too. "Hello!" she called through the open door, and waved to him to come in.

"Well!" he said. She was the bar's only customer, except for a morose-looking soldier who nursed a beer several stools away near a dark and silent jukebox.

"I'm having one for the road. Come on, you have one too."

"I hate liquor in the morning."

"Oh, come on, Jimmy! Give my friend the same."

"Hello, Jimmy," said Pete, who had once played on the same village baseball team with the bar-tender, who was never called by his right name. He was one of the La Dow twins, and he and his brother had been christened Pleasant and Welcome.

"Hi, Pete! When did you get back?"

"Yesterday. I mean, Saturday."

"Get the old diploma?"

"Yeah."

"What you gonna do with it?"

"Oh, frame it, frame it."

"What do you want?"

"Oh, gimme a coke." Pete relapsed into the Bonacker intonation that had alarmed his mother during his childhood.

"A coke!" Cyrilla exclaimed. "Have a real drink. I'm saying good-bye to the world!"

The boys looked at each other and then away. Pete knew that he would feel closer to Jimmy than to her, if she was going to be dramatic.

"I wanna coke," he insisted.

"I wouldn't be saying good-bye to the world if it weren't for your father."

"My father?"

"He wouldn't give me a job."

"What kind of a job?"

"In his laboratory."

"I didn't know you did that kind of work."

"I don't."

"Then why—?"

"Because he should have given it to me anyway. I need it. He could help me. But he just turned his back on me. I don't think he was even aware of my existence. In his book he seemed so kind, so understanding, but in life the only person he seemed to be aware of was your mother.

He didn't even know my name! I never saw a man who was so preoccupied."

"Oh, well, he has so much work to do."

"No, it was something else. I'm sure of that. I could feel it."

Jimmy served Pete his coke. He raised his glass to her. "Well, here's to you. Where are you going?"

She didn't raise her glass, and he wondered with some alarm if she were suddenly going to turn it over or throw it away, the way she had yesterday. "I'm saying good-bye to the world."

"Yes, but where are you going?"

"Into a convent."

Jimmy looked impressed. "A convent?"

"Yes." She seemed to enjoy the sensation she had created.

The soldier who sat several stools away looked at her for the first time. "My sister went into a convent," he said.

"She did?" said Jimmy.

"Yeah, they shaved her head."

"I'm not going into that kind of convent," said Cyrilla.

"Oh, yeah, they always shave your head." The soldier looked at her as if he thought she might also be helped by a bath.

"I'm not going into that kind of convent."

"That's the only kind there are."

"I'm not going into a Catholic convent."

"That's what I said. That's the only kind there are."

"Oh, no, there are other kinds. Give me another, Jimmy."

"The same?"

"Yes."

"What other kinds are there?" Now the soldier looked belligerent. He climbed off his stool and walked towards them.

"Well, there are Protestant convents."

"Protestant con——"

"But I'm not going into one of them, either. I'm going into another kind. They call it Vedanta. That means——"

"The only kind of convents are Catholic. Anybody knows that."

Jimmy put a drink in front of her with a disapproving air. His attitude had changed since she had introduced the quarrelsome subject of religion. "That'll be sixty cents. And sixty cents for the other one. That makes——"

"I'll pay," said Pete. "Why don't you come along with me?" he asked her. "I'll be going home soon."

"I don't want to go home with you. I don't ever want to see your mother again. Tell her she can give my bag away. It's all packed."

"Did you just walk off and——?"

"Or your father. I never met such a cold man in my life. Couldn't he see I need help? He didn't even notice me. You're absolutely right, soldier, the only kind of convents are Catholic, and I'm not going into one of them. I'm not going into any other kind, either. I'll go to Paris, and have some fun before I crack up. Couldn't he see I need help? I tried to talk to him. What's he made of, anyway?"

"Why don't you come along?" Pete repeated.

"No, no. I'm going to sit here until my train comes. Two-thirty, is that right, Jimmy?"

"That's right."

"I'm going to sit here until it comes. And then I'm going to go to Paris. They wouldn't let me into the convent anyway."

"Was I right?" said the soldier, smiling at her and holding out his hand.

"Absolutely right." She shook his hand. "I'm not as good a girl as your sister was. They wouldn't let me in."

"Oh, she wasn't so good. But she's all right now. She works in the dairy. They got a hundred cows."

She took a pencil and a notebook from her handbag. "Say, Jimmy, will you bring my drink over to that booth? I want to write something. Maybe if I have a book published they'll be more willing to take me in. I'll do it in Paris. About three years from now my grandmother's money will be gone anyway, and I'll be a wreck, and then maybe they'll let me in. That's what you call planning your career."

"Why don't you come along with me?" Pete said.

"No, no, but thanks for helping me make up my mind. Now I see what I've got to do. I feel better."

He helped her get installed in the booth, and when she refused again to go home with him he said that he thought he'd better run along. When he left he looked back at her and she seemed already to have forgotten him. She was reading something written in the notebook, and there was a look of perfect concentration on her face that he had not seen there before. The yellow fingers of her free hand were scratching her scalp. The highball stood within easy reach. He went away with the impression that he had seen a poet at work.

## XXIII

### BEATING THE GAME

THE shock was extremely painful to Carlotta, who began to fear that, after having put herself beyond the reach of passion, she would still be conquered by sympathy. If David couldn't get her by foul means, he might get her by fair. She was grateful therefore when he repeated his reassurances, told her that he would soon be as well as ever, and changed his plans, deciding to drive to New York with

her and Peter that afternoon, instead of waiting, as he had thought to do, until the next day. Because he was therefore not going to try to get any writing done that day, he said he would like to stroll into the village, as a little last holiday before he set off for the hospital.

She wanted him to stay with her in the house, but she was glad when he said he would take a walk. The news of his illness became less trying as soon as he left, and it was easier to believe his reassurances when she no longer saw his face, which became underscored with suffering the moment she knew what it concealed. She had known all along that he was making overdrafts upon his physical reserves, that he was interested in psychosomatic medicine because of his own psychosomatic precariousness, that he wished to escape the over-stimulation of urban life because of his own ancestral urban over-intensity, but she would be able to forget all that if she did not have to look at him.

It was absolutely essential that she put herself into a more cheerful state of mind. Otherwise she would never be able to get through a single rehearsal. The terrifying word he had uttered must not be permitted to threaten an all-important *brio*. It must be treated as unreal, merely technical and merely temporary. If not, it would assume an untimely and no doubt unwarranted significance and wreak havoc both emotional and professional. She took, from a small green bottle, a half-tablet of a variant of aspirin in which she had great confidence.

She was sitting in her bedroom and doing quiet breathing exercises that had a good record for calming her nerves, while Ticky at her request read to her the favourable notices she had received after the opening of *His French Wife*, when the telephone rang. The message came from New York, and when she heard it was from a smart magazine that wished to print a description of her apartment in New York, with photographs, she took the receiver

herself and arranged to meet the magazine's staff writer and photographer the next day in the City. Nothing could have been more opportune; she felt better already as she thought ahead to the favourable comments she was sure to receive when this unexpected publicity, which had been arranged by Nancy's firm, was given her. Upon hanging up she immediately sent a long and grateful telegram to Nancy, and observed to Ticky, "Mrs. Whitlock is always so thoughtful."

The telephone rang again. She answered it herself and heard the voice of Dolly Miles, contrite for yesterday's gossip about her and eager to issue an invitation for next Saturday at once. "We're going to try to make it something special. We'll fly in caviare from Persia. You know, the fresh kind. Carlton says, 'If there's going to be a war, let's at least get ready for it.' There'll be exactly a hundred at table. Just our best friends. You and David simply must come."

"I don't think we can, dear. I'll be rehearsing, and David will be in the hospital."

"Is it anything serious?"

"Oh no, just a routine 'check-up and *perhaps* a minor operation, but I don't think he'll be out in time. I'm so sorry. I'm sure it will be wonderful."

Dolly's eagerness to make amends improved her morale. When Ticky started to go on with the reading of the old notices, which she had said she wanted to hear so as to refresh her recollections of the play, she interrupted and said that now she recalled it sufficiently. She sent Ticky into a storage room to get some clothes that she would need during the summer's tour.

David, of course, would never have reassured her about his illness if it had been really serious. The treatment of that disease had improved greatly in recent years. The account she had given Dolly was actually justified. He would soon be well again, and therefore there was no sense



in using words that might outlive unpleasantly their brief justification.

The telephone rang again. The call came from New York, and it was a young man whom she had never met, who said he was going to direct the summer theatre production of *His French Wife* for Morty and he was simply delighted to have the chance to work with such a consummate artist as she was. He had seen her act many times, and he had worshipped her from afar, but he had never dreamed that he would have an opportunity to work with her. It was the first real break he had had, and he was so happy that it gave him a chance to meet her and learn from her. He seemed like an awfully nice boy, and very intelligent too, and she felt better when she hung up. He had made the call at his own expense, and it was simply to tell her how glad he was to be given the privilege of working with her.

She realised again how foolish she had been ever to take seriously for a moment David's silent criticism of her profession. As long as the theatre could attract young men like that, it was going to be a wonderful thing and offer a wonderful life to anyone who went into it. Even the failures, the broken hearts and every light on Broadway, ought to consider themselves lucky for the wonderful contacts they had made and the wonderful art they had contributed to. For even the least of them made an important contribution. It wouldn't be what it was without the press agents and the misfits and the stage-hands and the night-watchmen and the bit-players and the hoofers and the drama school students—all, all of them!

The trouble with David was that he had been away from her too long. He had a bad tendency to try to play the game too closely according to the rules. She could have restrained him. She could have developed in him a health-saving mistrust of principle. His mistakes were typical of a man who tried to be too good. She had read about a holy

man in India, supposed to be the best man of modern times—almost as good as Jesus—and he had had the same disease as David had. He had died of it, and David of course would be saved, because he lived in a better time and in a better country, but the cause had been the same. And the crucifixion of Jesus—hadn't that been inevitable? There *was* a way to beat the game, and it consisted of never taking the rules too seriously. If you took things too logically you were sure to crack up. Some growth developed inside you and ate you up. In David's case, fortunately, the growth would be cut out, and then he might live to be ninety—there were many such cases on record. His father had died, but like the holy man in India he had lived too soon.

The telephone rang again. It was her agent, to discuss the terms made with Morty. For the thousandth time she felt that she only lost money by having an agent. The agent sounded surprised when she told him how much she had got out of Morty. And of course he had been out on a boat on Long Island Sound when he should have been handling the situation.

The telephone rang again. It was a newspaper man in New York who said he was going to run a nice story about her in next Sunday's paper. What did she think the angle ought to be? She always gave him a nice present at Christmas, and she made a note in a little blue book to give him an extra nice one next year. As for the twenty-eight hundred that he owed her from the stupid game at Morty's, of course she would never get it.

The telephone rang again.

## XXIV

## LIGHT, MORE LIGHT

BEFORE he went for his walk David found himself, for the first time since his return, alone with Ticky, who was on her way to the storage room to get some clothes for Carlotta. They met in the upper hall. Her work in the theatre, which he knew she now preferred to nursing, had continued to leave its mark on her. Yesterday he had seen a copy of *Variety* near her seat in the kitchen. It had been strange to hear her refer to Mr. Gillham as an 'angel' in her soft Lancashire speech. She had been especially nice to Spartas because of his position in the theatre. And she knew what every critic had said of every performance that Carlotta had given.

"Mrs. Holderness says you're going to hospital tomorrow," she declared, as if bringing a charge against him.

"It's nothing serious."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Oh, yes."

"I was sure there was something wrong the instant I laid eyes on you."

"It's nothing serious."

"Do be careful, won't you?" Her great blue and white bosom looked concerned.

"I'm always careful."

"How can you say that when that awful German——"

"That was an accident."

"Do be careful," she repeated, as if making a personal request, and then, evidently in distress because she had spoken earnestly, left with some excuse about the need to do a week's work in a few hours. He went downstairs and, without taking a hat, outdoors. It had been pleasant to talk to her, it was still pleasanter to be alone. So much

had happened in the last few days, and so much was going to happen in the next few, that he was hungry for perspective. A little action now went a long way with him, and his life recently had been crammed with it. He was more tired than he had ever been before, and no one seemed to notice it. There was no diminishment of the demands upon him. \*

The morning expanded with the season. While its air grew warmer David found new signs, as he walked alone, that the village was preparing itself for the two summer months that provided it with nearly all of its income. The tan-thighed girl in bathing-shorts who cycled sedately towards the beach, the business man with a palm tree on his shirt-front who read a newspaper on the front porch of a green-and-white colonial inn, the puffy, diabetic nurse screaming "*Donne la main!*" at a bored and inattentive child, the lean gardeners clipping jolly, round human forms into privet, the vintner's truck delivering straw-lined cases of champagne at a back door—all seemed to be extras taking their places on an oversize stage before the curtain rose on an annual dance festival in honour of the sun.

David found himself thinking of Marthe, who would especially have enjoyed the lovely white doors, with fan-lights and sidelights, that were *not* locked at night. Mutual trust of that kind would have meant so much to her! She would have done her *solfège* as if it were a song by Gabriel Fauré that she particularly loved, with more energy than was wise. He could see the brown stain of a throat spray on her yellow dressing-gown, and her blue-black hair which was not yet put up on her head for the day. He could also remember the look of disappointment on her face when they rode out to the airport in silence, through a gloomy workers' district with *Parti Communiste* placards, on their last ride together. He had failed her, as he had also failed Carlotta.

It was good, though, to feel in tune with the village, because he had once hated it. It had cruelly punished him, and only because he had later wrested a tiny portion of respect from it was he able to walk through it now with affection. And since he might be seeing it for the last time, that was important. Very important. If he was going to die he wanted to die as much at peace with his world as possible. The danger of dying was still a new idea to him. For less than a week he had been aware of it. The operation had been arranged by transatlantic telephone. His plans to return had been speeded, and these perhaps last thoughts he was thinking, as he gazed at the drowsy village pond, admired the green and purple of its mallard ducks, and approached the gently tiled tombstones that adjoined it, had the unpredictability of improvisations.

But he knew how lucky he was. If it was death it was luxurious death. At a time when millions of others died far away from home, on battlefields or in air-raids or in gas chambers or in labour camps or before firing squads, he had been given a chance to part amicably with Marthe, to come back to East Hampton, to see Carlotta and Pete, to get ready. And if it wasn't death he would be able to go on with his work. There would be no halt in his programme to give some children a kind of preparation at least for the surprises and malnutritions of modern industrial life. A resection was not much fun—his tough father had complained of it bitterly, said he had wished he had died, and failed to live long afterwards anyway—but it was possible to get used to a smaller stomach and live for years and years.

There was no heroism in such an attitude. Stoicism was his style and his health. If he railed against the untimeliness of his departure he would merely make himself both wretched and ill. Besides, he had got used to the idea of death, in peace and in war. Objectivity helped his work and, indirectly, his well-being. If he failed to work steadily

he became discontented and unwell. Therefore it was mere expediency to be detached—even about life itself.

But there was another reason of course for his detachment. He had been *trying* to keep his spirits up ever since Carlotta, in her sunny bedroom, doing her 'wave', had so obviously thrust him away from her, and at a time when they had seemed at last about to be truly reunited. He had thought he had conquered the *disappointed* look in her eyes, but it had been there, and as painfully as ever, while they walked to the barn. Only afterwards, when they hurried back home, had she looked at him more sympathetically. And then there had been more pity than love. And merely because he had told her about his disease.

Then she had turned to him again. But a little later there had been a second withdrawal, this time managed more suavely, more logically. He would never get the spontaneous final caress that he wanted so disgustingly before he went to the hospital. And the reason of course was simple. He had failed her.

She was not only a woman, she was an artist. He had failed her twice.

As a woman she would not give him the invaluable perspective that he got from her so many times, if he led her to feel, as he did very often, he knew very well, that he was in the least critical of her. The very thing that made him a clear-headed observer spoiled their relations. Science outwitted itself, because there had to be a scientist. It was like breathing unavoidably on an experiment that could only be soundly conducted away from bacteria.

As an artist she was committed to the production of beauty. She had to follow her demon. An inferior kind of beauty, to be sure, because at the mercy of a particularly vulgar society. Not nearly as good an æsthetic climate as Marthe or any other serious musician enjoyed. Nevertheless, Carlotta was an artist, and that meant her madness, her greediness, her childishness had to be accepted. All the

sham and rottenness too: and really accepted. Only so could an artist, the most human of beings, be understood. Any other approach was pedantry. Accept her and she would open up the world to you. Be only for an instant cool, and the gates closed for ever. And a popular comedienne, if she were properly observed, might be as much a source of light as the most intuitive diagnostician.

And by now he knew her so well that every move she made, or didn't make, was full of meaning.

Naturally he had avoided the girl in the sweat-shirt. Another woman and another artist. It had been hard: the wreckage was so imminent. Sooner or later some confident theorist would try to straighten her out. At least she would not be on *his* conscience. She had talent, she ought to be left alone. If she were left alone there was a chance in a hundred that she would come through. With help she would have no chance at all. In ten years or so, more likely fifteen or twenty, she might be able to assimilate the scientific clarity that she thought she wanted. Not before. Now it would be mere words. Or worse: premature adaptation. Social streamlining. Anyway he was in no position to talk to her. Or anyone. He couldn't even talk to the priest's gossiping housekeeper in Sag Harbor or the miserable conductor on the railroad. Let alone such a gifted girl. Much better to hurt her feelings.

Too bad Cyril couldn't help her. A good man, an excellent teacher. But of course she had to break away from him. She had begun to despise him already.

Both of them were obsessed with religion. Not very deeply. Nothing like the primitive intensity in the cellophane Bible bought for a quarter at the airport. Nothing like the dynamic tranquillity of the Zen master in the spotless temple in Japan who managed to make all Western psychologists seem like amateurs. But both of the Whitlocks had passed beyond the religious provincialism of their native New England: the father to

Aquinas, the daughter to the Upanishads. It seemed to be a New England pattern. Perhaps later when the United States had got used to its new place in the world it would be an American pattern too.

He himself had had to get away from religion, to make any progress at all. In the war-time prison, surrounded by German barbed wire, he had thought of God again and read the books of many mystics. That was a pattern too. Later he felt himself moving towards those scientists for whom the old secularism, which proved to contain so much unconscious religion, was not enough. Perhaps, as Whitehead had said, a new religion was 'in the making'. If so, its first job seemed to be to avoid the terminology that had been used by the old. But now, when it occupied more and more of his thoughts, he might have no time for it. Meanwhile he was not going to talk about it. (Though he often wondered how his country project, which aimed to prepare children for modern life, could hope to succeed without giving them an adequate religious or philosophic foundation.)

In prison he had realised that science, as had happened so often to his colleagues, was breeding in him a contempt for people. That had frightened him. It was a constant occupational hazard: to be dehumanised by his knowledge of humanity. One could perform humanitarian tasks daily and yet be subtly ruined by them. Some of the best minds flunked *that* test.

As usual Carlotta was his salvation. If he looked at her critically, scientifically, she filled him with horror. Before the War he had almost left her. He had seen that she was turning her back on most that was good in her, that she was becoming coarse and weirdly selfish. Now he knew better than to look at her that way. Once he let himself see her as she was when she was alone, see the world with her eyes, she became not only pathetic but beautiful. The lessons to be learned from her were profound. She might



even teach him how to spare himself, replenish his energy. if he came back from the hospital. He had learned more from her than in any laboratory or clinic. But only when he suspended judgment. She had to be seen with the patience due a patient.

He was approaching the cluster of houses that constituted the heart of the village. The tombstones which slanted like the bed-posts of very restless sleepers had been passed, and he was abreast of a tall white pole where the national colours flapped lazily in a fifteen-mile breeze from the south-west. On his left stood the library where he had first made the acquaintance of Darwin and Pasteur and Newton and Galileo. He hitched rides from Sag Harbor to get books that he couldn't get there. And farther up the road stood a house where he used to go square-dancing, to allemande left and honour his partner and dive for an oyster and dig for a clam.

Whatever was going to happen, he felt at peace with it. There had not been such sustained radiance in his entire life. The most commonplace objects—a brass knocker, a field of young potato plants, a glimpse of the ocean, a poster announcing an exhibition of paintings—took part in a general illumination. Imitative buildings and dull-eyed tourists became poetic. There could only be thanks for the malignant growth that had restored to him the unreflecting pleasures of a child.

He stopped short and took out his notebook and pencil. Of course! Cancer patients were well known to medical observers as being unusually co-operative. Only a few weeks ago he had been reading an extremely interesting book which touched on this very point. The author had said that in studying patients who were dying of cancer and had made their peace with it he had often felt that he was in the presence of those who had made some important discovery which they could not communicate, because there was no language for it. Perhaps they felt

*grateful* for a new insight, a new peace that had been given them. At least it was a psychological possibility worth following up and testing—if a test could be devised for it. And it was high time anyway that he stopped thinking about himself and started learning as much as possible from his disease. Writings by Sheldon and Draper and Lewis came to mind. He must look them up and re-read them. They might give him an idea. He wanted to know more about the kind of person who got cancer, and the kind of life that assisted it; there were many conflicting theories. His father's case had come, he often thought, from over-exercise of will; perhaps his own had come, through filial change of goal, from over-pursuit of idea. In each case an unbalance, a volation, a retribution.

He was in an excellent position to get valuable information. With luck he might be able to do as much in the fight on cancer as he had been able to do in the fight on heart disease. Few things had meant as much to him as the gratitude of a colleague—only a colleague would have understood his contribution—for an early paper on psychological factors in rheumatic fever that had indirectly helped the colleague's daughter.

Now he was in the heart of the village and passing an antique shop. In the window, next to a brass-handled cherrywood chest, two empty pine frames leaned against a primitive, flat-style portrait of a forgotten clergyman. The frames might be useful, they seemed the right size to go round the carvings on the second floor of the barn that he had just visited with Carlotta. He had not had a good look at the carvings, and perhaps she would wish to leave them as they were, but in case she did wish to frame them, so as to set them off and call attention to them, these frames seemed to be of an appropriate style. At any rate she would appreciate having them given her. A present made all the difference to her. And if she didn't want them she could take them back and get something else. Her

eyes might not look *disappointed* during their ride to the City. And he owed her something after the abrupt way he had broken off their visit to the barn.

He opened the door marked Antiques. A woman came towards him with an encouraging smile on her tired, shop-worn features, and fortunately she merely said "Good-morning!" For a moment he had feared she was someone he knew and would greet him by name. What he did not want just then was to be distracted with amenities, quizzed about his travels, stared at as if he were a local Ulysses. But she was a stranger, a newcomer to these parts, and there was no need to be neighbourly with her, to drop the unnoticed spectator's rôle that had fitted him so pleasantly as a reaction to the wee'-end. Once his new solitude was punctured, his radiance would go also. The death of his ecstasy would set in. At the moment the sea, as some poet had said, flowed in his veins, and he could not bear to part with it. Whatever his eye lit on became his innermost possession, whether it was the gaudy wing of a flicker or a crumpled envelope on a pavement. The time would come when he would lose his new companions, but now he clung to them. They were <sup>dearer</sup> dearer than anything had ever been before, almost as much part of him as his family.

"Good-morning," he said with an attempt to conceal the remoteness that he felt. "There are some frames in the window. How much are they? I think my wife would like them."



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